

Article

A Framework for Assessing Climate Adaptation Governance on the Caribbean Island of Curaçao

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Abstract: It is becoming increasingly clear that Caribbean islands are very vulnerable to the effects of climate change, such as sea level rise, longer periods of droughts, loss of biodiversity, more extreme weather events (flooding and hurricanes), and increased freshwater demands. Addressing these issues encourages good climate change adaptation governance. So far, however, the literature has not discussed what good governance could mean in this context. The aim of this paper is, therefore, to address this knowledge gap by developing an assessment framework and showing its usefulness. The framework is based on a review of the literature and is applied in an assessment of adaptation practices in Curaçao. The assessment is based on a review of Curaçao policy documents and in-depth interviews with key stakeholders. We found that the developed framework was useful for obtaining a better insight into the quality of adaptation governance on Caribbean islands, and that in the Curaçao practices, the good governance principles of transparency and inclusiveness are better elaborated in comparison to connectivity, accountability and government effectiveness. We conclude the paper with some reflections on the potential of the framework and some suggestions for further research.

Keywords: good governance; climate change adaptation; Curaçao; small island developing states



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1. Introduction

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have been recognized as a distinct group of island countries since the 1992 United Nations (UN) Earth Summit, as they face specific economic, climate, and political vulnerabilities, including weak governance structures. A total of 38 UN Member States and 20 non-UN Member States are identified as SIDS. They are located in the Caribbean, the Pacific and the wider Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) [1]. SIDS can be found on remote locations, have limited resources, and tend to be highly dependent on tourism. Although they emit little carbon into the atmosphere, these small island countries often suffer the worst effects of climate change.

The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports [2,3] project substantial environmental changes. Even under an intermediate low-emission scenario, the following projections have been made for the Caribbean towards the last decades of this century (2081–2100): (1) an increase in air temperature of 1.4 °C; (2) a decrease in rainfall of 5 to 6%; (3) an increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events (66% increase in hurricane intensity); (4) a sea level rise of 0.5 to 0.6 m due to the thermal expansion of water and glacial melting, thus, causing more floods and beach damage, and (5) an increase in mosquitoes causing more outbreaks of vector-borne diseases [2,4]. These climate change impacts will affect the living conditions of entire communities. In order to address these challenges, good climate change adaptation (CCA) governance is required. CCA is a kind of container concept that extends over a large scope of empirical issues, such as avoiding land degradation and biodiversity loss, creating land

use plans; rainwater harvesting; provision of freshwater storage options and water efficient household appliances; application of beach setbacks, and sustainable fishing practices [5]. UNESCO's 2014 SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Actions Pathway calls on small islands to take action to build resilience to climate change impacts, to improve their adaptive capacity and baseline monitoring of the island systems, and to raise and communicate climate risk awareness by organizing a dialogue with local communities [6].

Many scholars consider governments as the main actor for coordinating climate adaptation, i.e., [7]. Particularly for long-term planning, hazard mapping, legislation for construction, and marine-protected areas, governmental institutions usually play a pivotal role [8]. Moreover, governments have to address issues such as improving infrastructures, generating effective and pro-poor governance structures, and enhancing individual and community capacity-building [9]. Other scholars also stress the role of governments in organizing effective community participation in climate change policies [10,11]. Having said this, governance not only relies on governments but also calls upon other societal actors to take initiatives. Ideally, these initiatives result in good governance. However, it is not clear what such a good governance may entail in the context of climate adaptation on SIDS and the southern Caribbean in particular.

In scientific journals, the concept of good climate change adaptation governance has not been specified and applied in studies on the southern Caribbean. A systematic review of 53 academic articles about CCA in SIDS showed that research has a key focus on adaptation strategies, but is primarily concentrated on the Pacific and much less on the Caribbean [12]. In an analysis of National Communications on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), a lack of climate change adaptation on Caribbean SIDS was one of the limitations mentioned, but good CCA itself was not studied [13]. Elements of good CCA were, however, touched upon. Middelbeek et al. (2014) focused on CCA governance in an urban settlement on Trinidad and Tobago and found that the lack of coordination and communication between the relevant actors was the main institutional challenge, particularly the gap between community-based and national-level adaptation planning [9]. Scobie developed a policy coherence framework to examine the climate governance architecture in the Caribbean region [14]. In order to assess the chances of successful CCA on SIDS, Kelman developed a framework to study stakeholder participation and showed the importance of community-based (local) participatory processes in order to integrate local knowledge [15].

Thus, research on good CCA governance in Caribbean SIDS is largely missing. Only certain principles were analyzed in relation to climate change adaptation. We aim to reduce this knowledge gap by elaborating on the concept of good climate change adaptation governance and developing an assessment framework, which we apply in a case study on CCA of Curaçao, an autonomous country with its own government within the Kingdom of the Netherlands. The island is predicted to become warmer and drier with longer seasonal droughts, which are expected to increase the freshwater demand for plants and people [2,3]. Rising ocean temperatures and ocean acidification will result in massive bleaching and the death of coral. Climate change also threatens the island's mangroves as salinity levels will become too high and the water too deep. Moreover, sea level rise in combination with short but heavy rainfall will accelerate beach erosion. Higher air temperatures and hurricane intensities pose a direct threat to hilltop vegetation. Climate change will not only pose a severe threat to the island ecosystem, but will have significant socio-economic impacts as well, since Curaçao is highly dependent on tourism—hurricanes, beach erosion, and coral bleaching do not match with an image of a safe holiday destination [4]. The general question we aim to answer is to what extent the Curaçao climate change adaptation governance can be considered good. In order to answer this question, we first look for conceptual clarification by reviewing and synthesizing relevant journal papers. The resulting framework will be applied in an assessment of the CCA governance practice of Curaçao. In the materials and methods section, we clarify our data collection and analysis. In the results section, we make clear to what extent the governance practice in Curaçao

can be considered good. We clarify what governance principles are addressed in relevant policy documents and what opinions key stakeholders have. Next, we discuss our findings and give some final conclusions.

2. A Framework for Assessing Good Adaptation Governance in the Caribbean

In the late 1980s, the World Bank launched the discourse on good governance [16,17]—Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs) [17]. In 2010, Lockwood came with a list of good governance principles [7]. Table 1 presents five good governance principles with belonging criteria, which we adapted from Lockwood and combined with the WGI indicators. The scholars that applied these principles in the context of SIDS are listed as well.

Table 1. Good governance principles and criteria found in the (SIDS) literature.

Good Governance Principles	Criteria
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and decision making is open to scrutiny by stakeholders [7,18–21]. • The reasoning behind decisions is evident [7,18,22,23]. • Achievements and failures are evident [7,24]. • Information is presented in forms appropriate to stakeholders' needs [7,16,19,21,24–27].
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing body and personnel have clearly defined roles and responsibilities [7,18,21,24]. • The governing body has demonstrated acceptance of its responsibilities [7,21]. • The governing body is answerable to its constituency ('downward' accountability) [7,16,19–21,23,25,27,28]. • The governing body is subject to 'upward' accountability [7,19,25,28]. • The levels at which power is exercised (local, sub-national, national, international) match the scale of associated rights, needs, issues, and values [7,17,26].
Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholders have appropriate opportunities to participate in the governing body's processes and actions [7,9,13,15,18,20–25,28,29]. • The governing body actively seeks to engage marginalized and disadvantaged stakeholders [7,9,19].
Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing body is effectively connected with governing bodies at different levels of governance [9,15,24,30,31]. • The governing body is effectively connected with governing bodies operating at the same governance level [7,9,13,15,23,24,31]. • The governing body's direction and actions are consistent with directions set by higher-level governance authorities [7,24,29,31].
Government effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of policy formulation and implementation [14,17,24,27]. • The reliability of commitment of the government to these policies [7,14,17,20,23,24,27]. • Policy coherence [14,24]. • Capacity development [20,22,24,27,29–31]. • Regulatory frameworks in place [16,17,20,22,24,25].

In Figure 1, we further elaborate on the assessment criteria by adding indicators to the framework. The five governance principles are operationalized in 17 indicators.

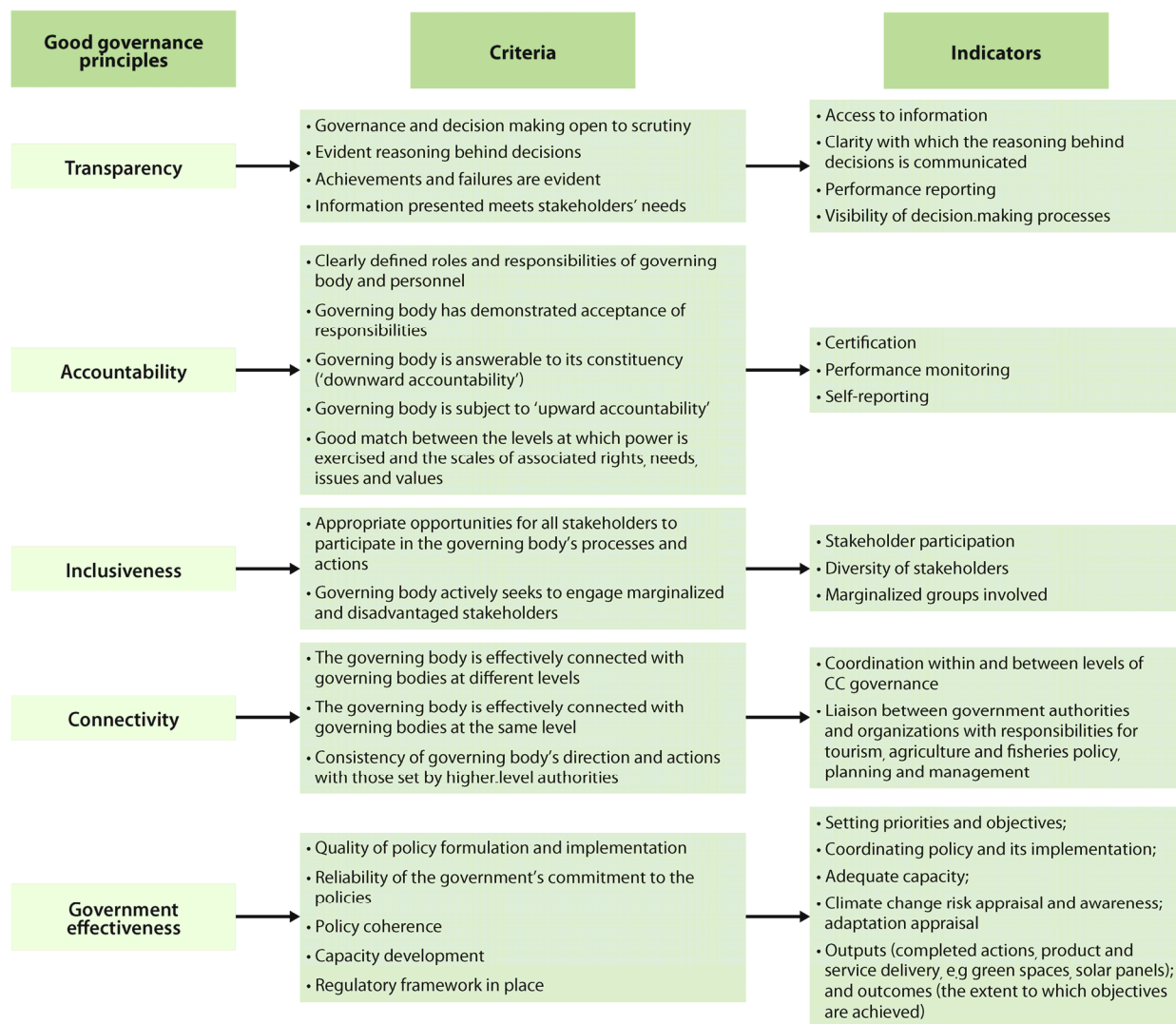


Figure 1. A framework for assessing climate change adaptation governance on SIDS [7,14,17,20,24,28,29,32].

Transparency will be assessed by four indicators: access to information; clarity whereby the reasoning behind decisions is communicated; performance reporting; and the visibility of decision-making processes [7]. Accountability will be assessed by three indicators: certification, performance monitoring, and self-reporting. Certification is assessed by impartial third-party auditing to determine to what extent the actor follows the governance principles. Performance monitoring and self-reporting, to assess actions within an organization (so-called internal accountability), are also used by Scobie [28]. Inclusiveness will be assessed by three indicators: active participating stakeholders; diversity of stakeholders; and whether marginalized groups are involved in the process of developing and implementing adaptation policies [7,29]. The criteria for the principle connectivity will be assessed by two indicators: coordination within and between levels of climate change (CC) governance; and the liaison between government authorities and organizations with responsibilities for tourism, agriculture, and fisheries policy, planning, and management [7,31]. Government effectiveness will be assessed by five indicators. Two come from the framework of Scobie: setting priorities and objectives and coordinating policy and its implementation [14]. Capacity development, adapted from Mycoo, will be assessed by the indicator 'adequate capacity' within the government for climate policies [24]. The criterion for government effectiveness, which is taken from Kaufmann et al. (2013) [17] and Kahn (2015) [20], will be assessed by the indicators, climate change risk appraisal

and awareness and adaptation appraisal, adapted from Hagedoorn et al. (2019) [32]; the indicator outputs (completed actions; product and service delivery) and outcomes (the extent to which the objectives are achieved) are borrowed from Lockwood [7].

3. Materials and Methods

In order to test the application of our framework, we have carried out an in-depth case study on CCA on Curaçao.

We used our framework first to assess whether and how policy documents deal with the 5 good governance principles; second, to structure interviews with key stakeholders (policy makers and NGOs) to obtain a better understanding of Curaçao CCA governance and to investigate how they valued the local adaptation governance practices on their island.

3.1. Assessing Policy Documents

Table 2 gives an overview of the main policy documents relevant for CCA in Curaçao. We have found these by doing a web search using the keywords “climate”, “change”, “adaptation”, and “sustainable development”. Most policy documents have a broader scope than CCA, but they all describe issues and activities relevant for CCA. The documents were selected since they address problems that could be aggravated by climate change, or address adaptation measures. We, therefore, consider them to be the leading documents for CCA governance in Curaçao.

Table 2. Policy documents relevant for CCA on Curaçao.

No.	Author and Title	Main Contents
D1	UNDP Barbados & The Eastern Caribbean, Overseas Territories Regional Risk Reduction Initiative (R3i) 2009–2016 [33]	Focused on the prediction and preparation for natural hazards and the improvement in SIDS’ resilience by providing a network of regional infrastructure, programs, policies, and protocols. It provided a basis for the institutionalizing of CCA in SIDS.
D2	RAC-REMPEITC-Caribe, Caribbean Island Oil Pollution Response and Cooperation Plan (OPRC Plan) 2012 [34]	Promoted and implemented regional cooperations in oil spill contingency planning, prevention, control, and cleaning up. This report is important for CCA because it targets key industrial risks that could be exacerbated by climate change (funded by the UN).
D3	Ministry of General Affairs, Strategies For Sustainable Long Term Economic Development In Curaçao 2013 [35]	Highlighted a strategy to develop a clean energy sector by switching to solar power to implement a polluter-pays principle, enhance a legislative framework to protect marine resources, enforce an integrated waste management plan, and create more energy-efficient technical norms for developing water and energy-saving measures.
D4	UNDP & The Government of Curaçao, National Development Plan (NDP) Curaçao 2015–2030 [36]	Focused on improving environmental sustainability. It describes that regional and international efforts are necessary to adapt to the impacts, such as renewable energy, water management, coral reef protection, and ocean management.
D5	Waitt Institute & The Government of Curaçao, Blue Halo Curaçao Initiative: Coastal Development in Curaçao: Best Practices to Minimize Adverse Impacts to Curaçao’s Marine Environment—2018 [37]	Under the Blue Halo Curaçao Initiative, ocean policies and a marine spatial plan were developed—these propose clear adaptation measures, such as relocating the development away from flood-prone areas (moving infrastructure, communities, and the built environment), allowing the continued use of areas affected by flooding (elevating roads, buildings, and utilities) and protecting the impacted land through engineered or nature-based infrastructure (seawalls and bulkheads; mangrove planting, and reforestation (funded by the UN)).

Table 2. *Cont.*

No.	Author and Title	Main Contents
D6	Ministry of Public Health, Environment and Nature, Environmental Policy Plan (EPP) Curaçao 2016–2021 [38]	Contains obligatory demands when issuing building permits, such as natural ventilation and cooling, and adequate insulation. It also includes the condition of watershed regulations and the building of permanent constructions in vulnerable areas in order to adapt to SLR and extreme weather.
D7	Ministry of Economic Development, National Energy Policy (NEP) for Curaçao 2018 [39]	Aims to make Curaçao’s energy sector more efficient, more transparent for stakeholders, and less dependent on petroleum imports. The plan is relevant because for the transition towards renewable energy, the plan has to consider climate change.
D8	UN & The Government of Curaçao, A Roadmap For SDG Implementation In Curaçao 2018 [40]	Focuses on disaster-risk preparedness, such as watershed management for coastal protection.

We have carried out a content analysis of the documents in order to assess to what extent and in what way the policies contain elements of the principles of good governance.

3.2. Collecting Data on Stakeholder Perceptions

Twenty stakeholders in Curaçao were approached by email and telephone. This resulted in 13 interviews. They were selected because they participated in the Curaçao Climate Change Policy Assessment Seminars in 2019. The interviews were conducted face-to-face in Curaçao during a period of 12 weeks, mostly conducted at the institute or workplace of the interviewee. The interviews varied from 40 to 90 min and were all recorded with permission of the interviewee. The interviewed stakeholders are directly or indirectly involved with climate change policies. Table 3 gives an overview of the interviewees.

Table 3. Interviewed stakeholders on Curaçao.

Respondents	
S1	Assistant Policy Advisor at the department of Risk Management & Disaster Policy, Ministry of General Affairs, (RM&DP, GA)
S2	Director Policy Department at the Ministry of Public Health, Environment, and Nature (PHEN)
S3	Policy Director at the Ministry of Traffic, Transport & Urban Planning (TTUP)
S4	Director at the Meteorological Department Curaçao (METEO)
S5	Senior statistician Business Statistics and Environmental Statistics at the Central Bureau of Statistics Curaçao (CBS)
S6	Director of Risk Management & Disaster Policy at the Ministry of General Affairs (RM&DP, GA)
S7	Policy Advisor at the department Risk Management & Disaster Policy, Ministry of General Affairs (RM&DP, GA)
S8	Civil servant at the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Nature (AEN)
S9	Scientific Director at the Caribbean Research and Management of Biodiversity (CARMABI)
S10	Secretary General at the Ministry of Economic Development (MED)
S11	Legal Policy Adviser at the Ministry of Public Health, Environment and Nature (PHEN)
S12	Director Foreign Economic Cooperation & the Policy Director at the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) (two stakeholders in one interview)
S13	Director at Amigu di tera (NGO, Curaçao Sustainable Nature Development)

As Table 3 shows, apart from S9 (the scientific institute for Caribbean Marine Biology (CARMABI) and S13 (the foundation Amigu di tera (AdT)), the interviewees work for the government. The most involved Ministries are General Affairs (S1, 6 and 7), Public Health, Environment and Nature (S2, S8 and S11), Traffic, Transport and Urban Planning (S3), and Economic Development (S10 and S12). People working at the Meteorological Department Curaçao (Dep. Meteo) (S4) and the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) (S5) were interviewed as they were also involved in the Curaçao Climate Change Policy Assessment seminars.

Interviewees were asked to clarify their perceptions on good governance aspects of local CCA policies. The framework served as a basis for the interviews. The questions asked were clustered around the five governance principles (transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, connectivity, and government effectiveness), and their corresponding indicators. First, they were asked which CCA policies and practices were in place, and then they were asked to judge the quality of CCA governance on the island. Using the indicators, they were asked more in-depth to what extent the good governance principles were addressed in the island's adaptation policies and practices.

The interviews were transcribed and coded in NVivo using the indicators. Qualitative scores were added to indicate whether the interviews were positive, neutral/moderately, or negative about the way the indicators were addressed in CCA governance on the island. The indicators were perceived as positively present (+), moderately present (+−), or not present at all (−). If there was a question mark (?) in the table, it meant that the stakeholder did not give a clear answer to certain questions or indicated that they could not oversee it.

4. Results

We first present the results of the assessment of the policy documents (Section 4.1) and continue with the perceptions of the interviewees (Section 4.2).

4.1. Presence of the Good Governance Principles in the Curaçao Policy Documents on CCA

Table 4 shows to what extent the eight policy documents address the five principles and the related indicators.

The table shows that four of eight policy documents address the good governance indicators of the framework quite well; they score on more than half of the 17 indicators. The document D3 with long-term economic strategies for Curaçao [35] scored the highest (15 of 17 indicators). The second best was the most recent document D8 Roadmap (14 of 17 indicators) [40]. Two other long-term documents were the third and fourth best: D4 The NDP for 2015–2030 [36] and D5 Blue Halo Initiative of the Waitt Institute [39]. The oldest document D1, the R3i 2009–2016, scored the lowest [33].

From looking more in detail, we can observe that the transparency principle was addressed rather well. Its indicators of access to information and performance reporting were dealt with in most of the documents (in six of eight documents) [33,35–37,39,40]. The METEO department was often mentioned for transparency in its policy documents.

Additionally, the accountability principle was addressed quite well in the documents (16 of 24 indicators), particularly by the indicators, performance monitoring and self-reporting. D4, The NDP, stresses the accountability in “implementation will be based on shared responsibility, between politicians, government and external stakeholders, with the latter group taking an oversight and monitoring role” [36] (p. 21). D5, The Waitt Institute report [37] (p. 17) indicates the importance of “reliable and consistent monitoring into the future.” The third indicator, certification (by a third external party), was addressed poorly (only in three of eight documents). Only D8, The Roadmap for SDGs, states that certification systems need to be in place and that “public-private partnerships have to be developed to ensure provision of certification and compliance with standards for export oriented products and services” [40].

Table 4. Good governance principles addressed in policy documents of Curaçao.

Policy Documents	D1 [33]	D2 [34]	D3 [35]	D4 [36]	D5 [37]	D6 [38]	D7 [39]	D8 [40]
Transparency								
Access to information	x		x	x	x		x	x
Clarity with which the reasoning behind the decisions is communicated			x	x				x
Performance reporting		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Visibility of the decision-making process			x	x	x			x
Accountability								
Certification			x		x		x	x
Performance monitoring		x	x	x		x	x	x
Self-reporting		x	x	x		x	x	x
Inclusiveness								
Stakeholder participation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Diversity of stakeholders			x	x	x	x		x
Marginalized groups involved			x	x				
Connectivity								
Coordination within and between levels of CC governance		x	x				x	x
Liaison between government authorities and tourism, agriculture and fisheries		x		x	x			x
Government effectiveness								
Setting priorities and objectives	x		x	x	x		x	x
Coordinating policy and its implementation	x		x					
Adequate capacity	x	x	x	x	x		x	x
Climate change awareness	x		x		x	x		x
Outputs and outcomes	x		x	x	x			x

The inclusiveness principle often received attention in the documents. Stakeholder participation was covered in all documents. For example, in D3, Strategies For Sustainable Long Term Economic Development In Curaçao: “This strongly indicates that ownership and inclusiveness are of critical importance” [35]. D8, The SDGs Roadmap indicates “With the promise of the 2030 agenda to leave no one behind, . . . in achieving the SDGs it is crucial to ensure that the most vulnerable and hard to reach subpopulations are adequately reflected” [40].

The principle, connectivity, between (government) institutions had less coverage in the policy documents than the first three principles of our governance framework. The important indicator of ‘coordination between levels of climate change governance (internal) and the economically important liaisons between government and tourism, agriculture and fisheries’ (external) was only addressed in half of the documents.

Additionally, the government effectiveness principle had less coverage than the first four principles, but this varied per indicator. The indicators, setting priorities and objectives and climate change awareness, were both addressed in five of the eight documents. E.g., D5, the Waitt Institute stresses “to educate local stakeholders about the ocean through community events and school activities” for awareness raising [37]. (In)adequate capacity was mentioned in seven of the eight documents. For example, the capacity of the Ministry of PHEN for implementation of environmental regulations was mentioned as poor. The indicator, output and outcomes, was covered below par in the studied documents in comparison to the meager coverage of the indicators, certification and marginalized groups.

In conclusion, our framework helps us to obtain a first impression of the quality of CCA governance. Some principles were clearly addressed in policy documents while others were not. This way, potential weaknesses in CCA governance can be identified.

4.2. Stakeholder Perceptions on Climate Adaptation Governance in Curaçao

Table 5 shows how the interviewees value the way the Curaçao government addresses the governance principles and indicators. Most of the interviewed policy makers express clear views on how the principles are addressed: either positive (+) or negative (−), or they give a more neutral or modest view (+/−), or indicate that they have no insight in the way the principles are addressed (?). Some policy makers appeared to have much stronger opinions than others. Several policy makers are quite positive, such as those of the Department of METEO, the MED and the Ministry of PHEN, while others are much more negative about good CCA governance on the island. Interestingly, the more positive respondents happen to be substantially active in CCA. They are executing policies and are involved in the practical steps. Therefore, they could elaborate more than the respondents who are more on a distance from executive policies. Amigu di tera, the oldest ecological NGO on the island, is disappointed about the way the principles are addressed. The NGO stresses the importance of climate change policy and action but felt for a long time to be “the only one crying in the wilderness” (S13).

According to the interviewees, two good governance principles are well addressed in CCA in Curaçao: the transparency principle (16 out of 39 scores are positive) and the inclusiveness principle (18 out of 39). In their view, the principles, accountability (6 of 39), connectivity (6 of 26), and governance effectiveness (12 of 52) are more moderately addressed. In the next sections, we present some more detailed findings on the way the principles are perceived.

4.2.1. Transparency

The transparency of CCA policies and practices in Curaçao is predominantly assessed positively by the stakeholders (see Table 5). Positive remarks made are “The decisions are often simply published. Everyone can see it.” (S9); “The government itself, i.e., METEO has, for example, sent information to citizens on a structural basis, informative folders that give clarification” (S2). Amigu di tera was more critical by stressing that they play a necessary role. “Amigu di tera is a determined organization, which used to be necessary. They make sure that a lot of information that people don’t actually have access to, appears on the doormat” (S9). The reflections on the individual indicators were mostly positive. On the indicator ‘access to information’, the METEO stakeholder (S4) boasted of the Curaçao Climate Change Platform (CCCP) that publicly develops interesting adaptation strategies and serves as a promising information platform. Most interviewees are positive about how the access to information is organized in practice. Other respondents answered: “. . . documentation is all available on the government website” (S12). Even the Carmabi stakeholder is positive (S9): “Maybe surprisingly, all governmental documents in Curaçao are open access.” However, funny critics are heard too: “The difficulty is that citizens don’t know that the information is there!” (S12) or: “The government is in a certain way very transparent, everything goes on the internet, which makes some parts of the website chaotic, out of date, and with different messages in the different languages. Providing correct information is difficult in Curaçao” (S11).

The indicator, “visibility of the decision making process”, was called upon in five interviews. One stakeholder referred to the newly formed Curaçao government (May 2021) that came up with a ‘sustainability coalition’, a platform “where all actors can inform each other about developments in the field of SD. The idea is to start immediately with monitoring all interventions and initiatives, like the yearly SDG week, that leads to the realization of the SDGs in Curaçao in all kinds of areas and fronts” (S12). However, another stakeholder was clearly negative: “coordination lacks and there are too many institutional problems” (S8). One stakeholder mentioned the Climate Change Committee Curaçao (C4)—established by the Ministry of GA, which made an inventory of the status of climate policy measures—as a positive example of performance reporting. Another stakeholder was enthusiastic about the upcoming monitoring dashboard that is developed not only for Curaçao but for the entire Kingdom (that also includes the Netherlands, Aruba, and Sint-Maarten (S12).

Table 5. Stakeholders assessing the way the Curaçao government addresses the good governance principles.

Stakeholders	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13
Transparency													
Access to information	?	+	?	?	+	?	+	+	+	+	+	+	+−
Clarity whereby the reasoning behind the decisions is communicated	?	?	?	?	?	?	+	?	+	?	?	?	?
Performance reporting	?	?	?	+	?	?	+	?	+	?	?	+	?
Visibility of the decision-making process	?	+	+	?	?	?	?	−	+	?	?	+	?
Accountability													
Certification	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	−	?	−	?	?	?
Performance monitoring	+	+	?	+	?	?	?	+	?	−	?	+−	−
Self-reporting	−	?	?	+	?	?	?	?	+	−	?	?	?
Inclusiveness													
Stakeholder participation	+	+	+−	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	−
Diversity of stakeholders	+−	+	?	+	+	?	?	+	?	+−	?	+	−
Marginalized groups involved	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	?	+	?	?	−
Connectivity													
Coordination within and between levels of CC governance	?	+	?	?	?	+	?	−	?	+	?	+	−
Liaison between government authorities and tourism, agriculture and fisheries	?	?	?	?	?	+	?	?	?	?	?	+	?
Government Effectiveness													
Setting priorities and objectives	?	+	−	?	+	+	−	?	+	+	−	+−	−
Coordinating policy and its implementation	?	?	+−	+	−	+−	?	−	?	+−	−	?	−
Adequate capacity	−	−	−	+	−	+	?	−	+−	−	+−	?	−
Climate change awareness	+	+−	?	+	?	+	?	+−	+−	?	−	?	+
Outputs and outcomes	?	?	?	+	?	?	?	−	+	?	?	?	−

4.2.2. Accountability

According to the interviewees, the accountability principle is poorly implemented in Curaçao's climate policy—its specification is insufficient and not structurally carried out. "There is too little accountability in governance in general in Curaçao. We tend to cover things up. On a small island, accountability is a challenge" (S10). Several points of criticism were mentioned. Diving into the indicators underscores these critical remarks. The respondents indicated that a climate governance mechanism should be developed to hold each other accountable. The roles and responsibilities are ambiguous and not clearly demarcated between ministries, at the cost of efficiency and effectiveness. A clear division of roles and responsibilities for accountability is particularly important because this policy field is rather new, and several ministries are involved [7]. The interviewees referred to ambiguities around responsibilities for climate change policy issues, which is primarily due to the still-unfinished redesign of the ministries that started after Curaçao obtained its autonomy in 2010. "There is a blueprint of the government apparatus, which states what the tasks and responsibilities are of each ministry, but some responsibilities, duties and powers are still not anchored in law" (S8, TTUP, 2021). In practice, the METEO institute is the main driver for CCA. The related ministry of TTUP has to take full responsibility for CCA and make the decisions, but the TTUP stakeholder remarks: "We have a million other things where we are responsible for, and the climate is not on top of our list. That baton should be handed over to the Ministry of PHEN" (S3). However, on his turn, the stakeholder of PHEN argues that his ministry is primarily involved in public health (PH) and not in environment and nature (EN). The authorities of the ministries of PHEN and TTUP overlap. PHEN is responsible for water management, but TTUP is responsible for green infrastructure and sewerage (S2).

Furthermore, the ministry of GA and their core department of Risk Management & Disaster Relief (RM&DP) are the ones responsible for the execution of the Risk Profile 2017–2022. The interviewee of RM&DP, however, states that they are fully responsible for the action plans, but the SDG Roadmaps have no priority for them. "I think everyone is involved in it a bit, but everyone in their own area" (S7). Obviously, the respondents are negative about the indicator 'certifications' for climate change policies, as these are not yet established in Curaçao. The indicator "self-reporting" was only positively reflected upon by the stakeholders from the NGO Carmabi (S9) and METEO (S4), however, only concerning their own institutes. The respondents slightly better assess the indicator 'performance monitoring', and interestingly, they explain this because international forces are watching. Curaçao has to comply with the RAMSAR convention, the CITES Convention, and the Cartagena Convention (SPAW Protocol), which have to be established in national legislation (S2). Although ministries can be interrogated by the Court of Audit, and the SER (socio-economic council), there is currently no local system of accountability for different ministries. The idea, however, exists to set up a sort of Central Planning Bureau to analyze and better coordinate this (S2).

4.2.3. Inclusiveness

Inclusiveness is reviewed rather positively by almost all respondents. The Ministry of PHEN mentioned, for example, the participation of stakeholders in climate change sessions at the University of Curaçao, but admitted that usually the same stakeholders are involved. When asked about the involved stakeholders in the Curaçao Climate Change Assessment, the stakeholder of the RM&DP states: "Uhm, I think we score satisfactory on all fronts. Here and there a 6 minus. Here and there a 6 plus" (S6, RM&DP, 2021).

Nevertheless, some critics are heard as well suggesting improvements to be made. Ministries may be trying to maintain and improve the involvement of stakeholders through the CCCP and engage more marginalized groups. 'Diversity of stakeholders' and 'involvement of marginalized groups' are so far only recognized in the preliminary phases of the climate policy process. Recognition takes hardly any place in the implementation phase. Some respondents, however, commented that with 55 nationalities, several ethnicities, and

marginalized groups, the population of Curaçao is already very diverse. However, according to most respondents, representation still has to be improved, as Latin and Chinese groups especially are rarely represented in governing bodies (S10, MED, 2021). S12 of the MED indicates that with the SDG Roadmap, the government is actively seeking to engage the youth of Curaçao in climate policies. S4 of METEO (2021) tries to involve the youth of Curaçao in the Roadmap. S12 puts forward that women and the main ethnic groups are not seen as diverse stakeholders in Curaçao and argues that most communication now takes place in English, excluding people who only speak Papiamentu or Spanish (S12). GA and TTUP proactively try to involve marginalized groups by visiting various neighborhoods and community centers in Montagne, Santa Maria, and Band Abou, which are relatively poor small villages in the countryside (S1, GA; S3, TTUP, 2021).

4.2.4. Connectivity

The principle of connectivity between (government) institutions is addressed far below the bar according to the interviewees. There is no climate policy orchestration of the involved ministries. The interviewee of the Ministry of GA feels like they have the responsibility (and they have) to coordinate all climate governance, whereas the respondent of the department of AEN does not see any coordination at all: “It feels like no one is actually coordinating climate governance” (S8). The METEO respondent argues to coordinate activities whenever considered necessary. The respondent of PHEN states that CCA is, for a large part, the responsibility of the three ministries. “It has to be a joint effort from different sides” (S2). This is confirmed by the interviewee of the Ministry of MED who stresses their positive cooperation with the ministry of PHEN. “We are of course involved in the sustainability discussion with an economic perspective. PHEN has traditionally been a bit more activist, purely from an environmental point of view. But we have made a lot of steps since then . . . That was not self-evident” (S10). Interviewees also refer to regional bodies such as the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) that play a coordinating role. Curaçao has to contribute to the aims of these organizations and their policies on CCA. Curaçao’s status as a country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands also necessitates certain coordination and cooperation activities. “Within the Kingdom we have also set up cooperation agreements between Curaçao, Aruba, and Sint Maarten, the CAS islands, and Bonaire, Eustatius and Saba, the BES-islands.” (S6, RM&DP, 2021). Furthermore, the ministries of PHEN, TTUP, the MED, and the foreign Waitt Institution coordinate the Blue Halo Curaçao project. Some orchestration takes place on the government level but liaisons between the government and the private sector seem to be lacking. Only one interviewee could clarify the existence of a liaison between government authorities and organizations with responsibilities for tourism, agriculture, and fisheries by arguing that the Ministry of RM&DP has partnerships with these sectors (S6).

4.2.5. Government Effectiveness

Overall, the interviewees were not very positive about the effectiveness of Curaçao CCA, but the overall picture is a bit bifurcated. Interviewees tend to react in a half-negative and half-positive way on various indicators. On the indicator ‘setting priorities and objectives’, some (e.g., S3, S7) clearly state that priority-setting regarding climate policies has been quite limited. “The government’s priorities are on health and economy, not on agriculture, environment and nature, they are a bit overlooked” (S11). Other interviewees, however, see positive steps in their ministries’ priority-setting: “After a lot of effort from our side, most ministries have linked their budgets to the SDGs! Hopefully they start with it next year” (S12). Some interviewees also mentioned other cases of improved priority-setting, for instance, the action to clean up the pollution of the oil refinery, which the government was forced to do. The interviewee of the NGO Carmabi (S9) highly valued that in only five months’ time, no-fishing zones could be set up “whereas usually this would take 10 years.”

Most interviewees are skeptical about 'policy coordination and implementation'. They believe that coordinating climate policies is hardly possible since those policies fall under old legislation that is not yet amended into Curaçao jurisdiction after the dismantling of the Netherlands Antilles in 2010. Besides this troublesome unfinished law setting, there is also a lack of policy implementation due to conflicts of interest between the involved ministries (GA, PHEN, TTUP) and MED. Apart from this, interviewees tend to be negative about available capacity, arguing that there is too little budget and no qualified personnel. The METEO and RM&DP interviewees are a bit more positive. "From the management I can say that we are slowly but surely getting up to speed, so that all tasks, of which climate change is one, are started by means of foreign partnerships. We are not yet fully operational, but we are definitely getting there" (S6, RM&DP, 2021). Although climate awareness has improved over the last ten years, it is still considered to be low. "People are more aware that something is going on with the climate. They already experience sea level rise and temperature increase" (S2). Stakeholders involved in raising awareness refer to the positive role played by the awareness-raising roadshow of the Ministry of GA with the theme "being self-sufficient and becoming more resilient". More awareness is also expected to result from the increasing pressure of international bodies pushing Curaçao to implement climate policies.

It became clear in each subsequent interview that in terms of outputs and outcomes, climate policies are by far not very impressive. Positive exemptions such as the implementation of the no-fishing zones, coastal improvements initiated by the Blue Halo Initiative, and an NGO project on the protection of mangroves, were mentioned as well. Another example of a successful output is the installment of early warning systems for extreme weather, which METEO placed in some neighborhoods. A lack of financial resources is the first reason mentioned for a lack of progress in CCA. Others blame a lack of progress on the transfer (after 12 years) to the new jurisdiction of Curaçao.

5. Discussion

Overall, the interviews revealed that CCA on Curaçao can be criticized, as in the interviewees' opinions, several good governance principles are not well addressed. The policy documents address good governance principles better than the interviewees perceive them in practice. The accountability principle is well addressed in most policy documents, but the interviewees are rather critical about the accountability for climate policies on their island. This also applies to the governance principles, connectivity and governance effectiveness. For these principles, the interviews do not reveal a unilateral positive picture. Having said this, we must admit that only a limited number of stakeholders have been interviewed and that our results could be slightly biased. A more complete assessment should preferably also involve the private sector (tourism industry fisheries and agriculture), local communities, and more relevant NGOs. In order to obtain a more representative sample, the framework could also be translated into a survey which could be conducted (online) among a large population (in theory, including all people on the island).

Some of our results are in line with other research on CCA on Caribbean islands. Other scholars also noticed the difficulty to identify effective solutions and climate policies at the finer scales of small islands [41]. They argue that the output and outcomes are long-term results, which are not immediately measurable, especially not in small island states with often weak institutional bodies, a low administrative capacity, and no compliance tools in place. The fact that a lack of financial resources is reported to be a main factor limiting Curaçao's climate adaptation policies is in line with the results of other research on CCA policies on Caribbean islands [13]. An interesting finding in our case study is that our respondents see external accountability and external agents as highly important for good CCA governance. They put forward that critical views of foreign agents and obligations resulting from international conventions are necessary for the Curaçao government to take action, as it is difficult to have a good compliance system in place on small islands with high levels of parentage. This contradicts the findings of Scobie who found external

accountability to be weaker than accountability within government departments [28] as internal actors do not regard the external, which resulted in the development of silo's in the public environmental governance architectures.

The framework we synthesized from the literature was useful in obtaining a first impression of climate adaptation governance on Curaçao. The framework can be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of CCA governance and shows where improvements may be needed. The identified strengths and weaknesses, however, need more societal debates in order to come up with more specific improvement options. It can also identify potential tradeoffs which need societal discussions as well, as some criteria may conflict, and it may be too hard to meet all the criteria already put forward by Grindle [42]. Grindle prefers to speak of 'good enough governance', recognizing that SIDS are never capable of fulfilling all WGI's good governance indicators.

This brings us to the question of whether all the criteria and indicators are of the same importance. It is hard to give a straightforward answer to this question. Based on our own preferences, we would argue that government effectiveness precedes over the other criteria. Climate change adaptation has become an urgent issue for Caribbean islands, and in our opinion, this encourages the implementation of relevant adaptation measures. However, societal debates may result in another prioritization. As seen from this perspective, it is not necessary to prioritize criteria and indicators.

An option worth reconsidering for future research and debate is to tailor the framework further to deal with local peculiarities by including a list of potential adaptation measures (such as the withdrawal of investments from vulnerable areas, rainwater harvesting in cellars, water reuse, etc.). By adding such potential adaptation measures, interviews could be more focused. Another refinement of the framework could result from the application of it by other scholars in an assessment of CCA on other (Caribbean) SIDS. By comparing CCA governance practices, frontrunners may be identified whose governance characteristics could be used to further refine our set of indicators. If the latter is carried out, a more quantitative approach may be necessary. This implies that both criteria and indicators need to obtain a weight. Such a prioritization could also result in a more simplified version of the framework in cases whereby some indicators appear to be less important.

6. Conclusions

In this paper, we have reviewed the literature on good governance and synthesized this into a framework for assessing climate adaptation governance in Curaçao. By reviewing policy documents and interviewing stakeholders, we found that Curaçao CCA governance does not meet all the good governance criteria. Transparency and inclusiveness are elaborated the best out of the five principles. Government effectiveness, accountability, and connectivity are the poorest in place. The application of our framework resulted in a first impression of the strengths and weaknesses of CCA. The framework, however, is no panacea, but in our opinion, is a useful tool to initiate and structure debates on CCA on SIDS. We invite other researchers to apply it too and initiate more comparative studies, which could not only result in more in-depth insights in CCA practices on SIDS, but also in a further elaboration of the framework.

Our analysis shows that institutions that are basic for good climate governance are in place in Curaçao, but also that a sense of urgency on a grassroots level is still lacking. In several tonalities, our interviewees indicated that the government and other stakeholders should prioritize climate adaptation policies more and demand for more government effectiveness. We, therefore, invite the Curaçao government (and the Department of Risk Management & Disaster Policy of the Ministry of General Affairs in particular) to take steps towards concrete actions and to continue and coordinate the discussions with the stakeholders on these. This is not only urgent because climate change will affect small islands first [3], but meeting good governance criteria is or will soon also be a requirement for obtaining funding from international institutions such as the World Bank or the United Nations. SIDS with better climate governance will very likely be financed first.

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