



DELTA IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE II INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE, SCIENCE, CITIES AND BUSINESS
ROTTERDAM THE NETHERLANDS, 24-26 SEPTEMBER 2014

Deltas in Depth scientific sessions	
Deltas in Depth Theme 9. Governance of adaptation	
DD 9.1 Adaptation governance in comparative context	
Chair	Prof.dr. Katrien Termeer, Wageningen UR, the Netherlands
Presentations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Prof. Simin Davoudi, Newcastle University, United Kingdom● Eric Massey, VU University Amsterdam, the Netherlands● Suraje Dessai, Sustainability Research Institute, School of Earth & Environment, Leeds University, United Kingdom● Mark Zandvoort, Wageningen UR, the Netherlands

The session about adaptation governance, chaired by Katrien Termeer, provided us interesting insights into the governing of climate adaptation. A general outcome was that adaptation governance is mainly approached via a technical, risk perspective and that there is little discussion on other issues related to climate change, such as fairness, social and ecological transformation and justice.

The first speaker, Simin Davoudi, sets the issue of climate change in relation to the securitisation of nature, as we are living in the age of man and climate change (caused by humans) unravels the inescapable interdependencies between human and nature. She tells that the meanings of nature have changed over time: from a mechanical view (uncovering the secrets of nature by science and the desire to exploit nature via technology), to the limits of growth idea (exploitation of nature with no consequences was contested), towards the concept of sustainability (nature was seen as finite asset, which should be safeguarded for future generations). And currently the dominating discourse based on the changing climate is that nature is seen as a risk and is framed as a safety and security issue. Yet, she states that there is a fundamental difference with pre-modern times, as today's risks are caused by humans *'environmental disasters should be called developmental disasters'*. Seeing nature as a risk has implications, such as the perceived calculability and controllability, perceiving nature as a threat and national security issue. A shift is visible from environmental politics towards politics of securitization, leading to ignorance of opportunities that might arise from climate change. After that, Eric Massey spoke about differences and similarities with regard to adaptation governance choices in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and the UK based on the governance choices and dilemmas framework of Jordan and Huiteima. With regards to framing it is interesting that all countries view adaptation as technocratic problem, it is largely about managing risks and there is little discussion on issues of fairness, justice, equity et cetera. A difference is the framing perspective, for instance the Dutch view adaptation mainly as water management issue and also the UK takes water management as an entry point, while Sweden approaches adaptation via spatial planning. Climate adaptation in Sweden is decentralized, while the UK has central steering mechanisms to oversee adaptation and Germany has both (federal government provides financial and scientific support because the Länder were asking for leadership). It is striking that all countries state that no new governance modes or instruments are required for climate adaptation, yet in practice new regulations could be found. Eric tells that there is no one size fits all approach and that for all extremes (e.g. decentralization vs. centralization and a sectoral or integrated adaptation governance approach) disadvantages and advantages could be found. Questionable is if the existing mainstreaming approach will be enough?

Suraje Dessai provided us more insights into England's climate adaptation governance, as they are perceived as leaders, yet do they still fulfil this role? He tells that climate adaptation at the beginning





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was mainly a government's concern (hands-on approach), which has shifted due to an economic recession and changes in government to a hands-off approach and that adaptation in England is a devolved issue. Climate adaptation in England contains a mix of policies, actions and actors, which should occur naturally and without government's interventions in case of private interests. Two trends are visible; from adaptation to resilience and the perceiving of adaptation as big business. Suraje tells that too much faith is put on private autonomous adaptation, since in practice, individuals – in this study UK households – often struggle to build long-term adaptive capacity and their reactive coping responses are less effective. Suraje argues that more permanent physical measures, behaviour changes et cetera are unlikely to happen autonomously without further financial or government support, while the national adaptation plan lacks a transparent allocation of responsibilities and substantive and concrete policies, measures and solutions. This plan could be seen as missed opportunity to reassert the UK as leader in adaptation policy.

Lastly, Mark Zandvoort had a speech concerning uncertainty in planning approaches for water management. He tells that there is a diffused understanding about uncertainties, yet three dimensions in literature could be distinguished (nature of uncertainty, locations and level of uncertainty). Mark analysed adaptive delta management and water diplomacy with regards to how they deal with uncertainties. Both aim to address many long term uncertainties, yet in practice they mainly focus on physical uncertainties and the conceptualization of uncertainty. This mismatch between intentions (holistic uncertainty management) and practice could possibly lead to maladaptation, leading to a mismatch in adaptation approaches and possibly under- or overinvestments. This mismatch could be solved by integrating ex ante assessments to determine which planning approach would find the problem at hand best.

The panel and audience together thought about lessons for practitioners considering the four interesting and inspiring speeches. Some insights are that thinking in terms of government is more sophisticated in comparison to dealing with tricky terms of adaptation and uncertainty management and that we should make fair decisions that do not focus too much on risks and surrender. We should consider a country's or regions' traditions and history for adaptation governance, for instance Australia strives for a resilient strategy, while most European countries frame this as adaptation governance. Climate adaptation strategies can't be copied, yet lessons can be learned from other states. Climate change is a global issue that needs a collective response. Besides, in some countries (e.g. UK) a trend towards a retreating government is visible and collective responsibility is needed. And for some, climate change adaptation is simply not the first priority, as they are dealing with more urgent issues. Also the degree of public awareness about climate change was discussed, related to the concept of windows of opportunities often created by events and disasters.

