

# The Governance of Adaptation

## An international symposium

Amsterdam, the Netherlands, March 22-23, 2012

**Conveners:** Prof. dr. Frans Berkhout, Dr. Dave Huijtema, Prof. dr. Katrien Termeer

### Summary

In March 2012 a two day conference will be held in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, on “The governance of adaptation”. Topics to be discussed include: the framing of adaptation problems and goals, modes of governance and available instruments, agency and leadership in adaptation governance, science-policy interaction and adaptation. You are invited to submit an abstract of no more than 250 words on relevant issues before the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 2011. The purpose of the meeting is twofold: 1) to establish a network of researchers who are analyzing the efforts of both public and private actors to prepare for climate change, 2) to exchange insights on adaptation governance across the world and draw lessons in a coordinated way. We seek to bring together around 50 scholars, who will be selected after a review of abstract to be submitted to [governanceofadaptation@ivm.vu.nl](mailto:governanceofadaptation@ivm.vu.nl). A contribution to travel costs is available for all participants with an approved abstract. Presenters from within Europe will receive 150 Euros, travelers from outside Europe 500 Euros.

## **The need for adaptation**

One of the stark messages of the IPCC's Third Assessment Report was that climate change was already having observable impacts and that due to time lags in natural systems, no amount of mitigation can avoid it entirely (Watson *et al.* 2001). This warning was reinforced in the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (Klein *et al.* 2007). The projected impacts of climate change remain highly uncertain, but they will most likely to be spread unequally across regions. In Europe for instance the European Commission predicts that, the impacts of climate change will be felt across the Continent, but that Southern Europe and the entire Mediterranean Basin, mountainous areas (especially the Alps), coastal zones and Arctic regions of the EU stand to be most significantly affected (COM (2007) 354 final: 5).

Several factors have long inhibited a discussion on the governance of adaptation. Adaptation itself was long considered a taboo topic, potentially weakening commitment to mitigation through the reduction of climate change inducing emissions. The controversies surrounding climate mitigation have delayed action on adaptation, but such delay might also have to do with the way adaptation has been defined: either as an issue that is relevant "only" for developing countries, an issue that is relevant "only" at the local level, or an issue that "only" requires intervention from the private sector.

Over the past decade however, the discussion on adaptation has truly started and measures are being taken across the world (see for instance Ford *et al.* 2011). Adaptation to climate change can take multiple forms, occur at different governance levels, and in different policy sectors, presenting governors with a range of possible actions. Measures can be classified according to their: timing (anticipatory, concurrent, reactive); intent (autonomous, planned); spatial scope (local, widespread); and form (technological, behavioral, financial, institutional, informational) (Smit and Wandel 2006). A well known typology distinguishes between 'building adaptive capacity' – generally considered to include elements such as economic wealth, technology, infrastructure, information, knowledge and skills, institutions etc - and 'taking adaptive action'

(West and Gawith 2005), with the latter assumed to follow the development of the former. While governors and societal actors at a range of governance levels have started to develop adaptation policies (Swart et al. 2009; Ford et al 2011), it is still not clear what is the extent to which deliberate interventions need to be made by governors at national or supranational levels, and how far adequate responses will emerge independently amongst affected actors and communities at more local levels. This means that the concept of governance is highly relevant for adaptation.

## **Governance**

What attracts social scientists to the term “governance” is its ability to “cover the whole range of institutions and relationships involved in the process of governing” (Pierre and Peters 2000: 1). Clearly, “governance” is not the same as government: while government centers on the institutions and actions of the state, the term governance allows non-state actors such as businesses and civil society to be brought into an analysis of societal steering. Governance is also not the same as governing. Governing refers to those social activities which make a “purposeful effort to guide, steer, control, or manage (sectors or facets of) societies” (Kooiman 1993: 2; Rosenau 1992: 4). Governance, on the other hand, describes “the patterns that emerge from the governing activities of social, political and administrative actors” (Kooiman 1993: 2). It concerns “the ways and means in which the divergent preferences of citizens are translated into effective policy choices, about how the plurality of societal interests are transformed into unitary action and the compliance of social actors is achieved” (Kohler-Koch 1999: 14).

## **Relevant questions and issues on the governance of adaptation**

Given the relatively recent recognition of the need for adaptation and still emerging policy frameworks, it is no surprise that our understanding of the governance of adaptation is still relatively limited and evolving. While the definition of basic terms around adaptation are still evolving and there is still lively discussion about which theoretical frameworks are most appropriate for analysis, the number of empirical analyses of adaptation efforts is rapidly increasing. Given this situation we see space for international exchange and learning at both the conceptual and empirical levels. The meeting in March 2012 will focus on seven different topics, each of which will translate into one or more panels with papers. The topics on which we invite papers are:

### **(1) The framing adaptation problems and goals**

Governing is a purposive activity, but precisely which problems does it seek to address? “Problems” are not simply “out there” waiting to be tackled. On the contrary, actors often engage in struggles to present (or “frame”) particular phenomena into problems that suit their pre-existing political interests or policy competences. One of the most difficult choices confronting governors relates to which problem (or problems – given that they seldom emerge one at a time) to address amongst all those that concern the public (Dror 1971), how to define it and, following on from that, govern it. Having made that choice, other choices quickly loom into view. Decision makers often find themselves drawn to particular problems (or problem framings) because they appear to fit with the way in which they are confronting other problems. This in turn raises yet more issues. For example, who is deemed responsible for the emergence of this particular problem? Have they deliberately caused it or was it an unforeseen outcome of their otherwise legitimate activities? Conceptual papers about the way climate change adaptation issues are framed, and empirical analysis of the way in which governors and societal actors perceive and “frame” adaptation are welcome.

## **(2) The modes of governance and available instruments**

Which modes of governance will governors select to address problems? The main choice here is between creating and imposing a set of enforceable social norms hierarchically (i.e. through the instrument of regulation), allowing them to emerge and disseminate via market-based instruments in markets, or relying on flatter and more network-based modes in which trust-based incentives play a more important role (Kjær 2004: 41-9). Also, the issue of meta-governance, how to connect the various modes of governance is relevant. Under this heading we invite papers that conceptualize the challenge that adaptation presents and connect it to appropriate modes of governance. Empirical analyses that focus on the effectiveness of certain modes of governance, and the conditions under which they work, are also welcomed.

## **(3) Action at what levels?**

Having worked out what problems to focus on, and which mode of governance to apply, governors have to decide at which level to act. Here, the main choice is often presented as between acting locally -i.e. decentralization guided by the principle of subsidiarity- or at higher levels - e.g. regionally, nationally or internationally. There are several dilemmas buried away in this choice: greater local diversity may offer more opportunities for experimentation and bottom-up learning, but fewer opportunities for successfully implementing what is learned across space - a benefit corresponding to greater regulatory harmonization. Local decision-makers may have more direct access to information, but localism runs the risk of ‘capture’ by local interests. In practice, the choice between levels is seldom a binary one; action may be required at several levels simultaneously. And it may not be an entirely open choice – governors typically have a stronger legal competence, or prior preference, to act at some levels than others. Here conceptual questions about the politics of scale can be asked for example, but also papers discussing adaptation as a problem of multilevel governance can be proposed.

## **(4) Agency and leadership in adaptation governance**

Climate change adaptation could take place in a context that might be resistant to change, for instance because certain long standing policy principles and institutions might need to be altered,

or expectations and legal rights of certain group might be affected. In such a context, leadership that readies the governance system for change, provides longer term visions, and applies new approaches will be necessary. Often such leadership will come from motivated individuals with a long lasting motivation, known as social or policy entrepreneurs. How can we analyze leadership activity conceptually, and what do we know empirically about agency in the governance of adaptation?

### **(5) Timing in adaptation and adaptability**

When do governors act? When they have conclusive causal proof that a problem is causing harm? Before the problem becomes irreversible? Or before others have acted? The timing and sequencing issues invoked here are multiple, revolving around issues such as competitiveness (adopting potentially costly adaptation policies without knowing what others are doing can be hazardous), ‘first-mover’ advantage (where developing new technologies may lead to potentially lucrative export opportunities), and legitimacy (asking other regions or countries – particularly poorer ones – to act first, may well be perceived as illegitimate). In addition questions can be asked about the tensions between adaptation and adaptability – certain adaptation measures might create expectations or even legal entitlements that might be hard to reverse later on.

### **(6) Normative aspects of adaptation**

The governance of adaptation requires monitoring, planning, regulation, decision-making and distribution systems, dispute resolution and juridical review. All of those are founded nominally on the public interest, but the concept of ‘public interest’ is not unproblematic. Principles and norms offer legitimacy for the government to take measures, provide compensation, use regulatory or economic instruments and to protect all kinds of rights. Societal consensus on the public interest is based on approved laws, rules and plans and is nowadays often combined with a deontic (or a rule and norm-based) concept in which plans, decisions et cetera are judged by their ethical content and a rights-based approach. This approach has both substantive (human dignity, equal treatment and property rights) and procedural (fairness or due process, sound administration and transparency, and public participation) aspects. At the

same time there is a revival of elements of both a utilitarianism approach, e.g. aggregating individual preferences and the use of a cost-benefit analysis as an example of welfare economics as well as a dialogical approach in which the public interest is a result of an interactive process among concerned stakeholders and affected parties. Conceptual papers that discuss normative frameworks that can underpin the governance of adaptation, and papers that empirically probe the meaning and effects of such principles are welcomed.

#### **(7) Science-policy interactions and adaptation**

The importance of scientific knowledge in policy processes seems virtually undisputed. The academic literature traditionally problematizes the use of scientific knowledge in the policy domain: science and policy were often seen as different cultures divided by communication problems and diverging interests. This resulted in standard views of science and policy, still much present in the debate, which sees science and policy as virtually mutually exclusive. More recently however, partly under the influence of debates on the science underpinning climate policy, it is being recognized that the relation between science and policy is more complex. Models on the relation between science and policy have come to the fore that emphasize concepts such as science brokers, the science-policy interface, and boundary organizations. Those analyzing science-policy interactions on the basis of these models ask questions about: the way scientists move from descriptive analysis to prescription, how scientists operate in the media or in the courts, how personal and organizational values influence scientific advice, and how networks of relations between scientist and policy makers influence the advice giving function of scientists. We are particularly interested in conceptual models that allow the operation of the science policy interface in adaptation governance, and welcome empirical analyses of science-policy interaction in adaptation governance.

## **Planning**

A maximum of 50 papers will be presented at the symposium. Submitted abstracts will be evaluated on the basis of double blind review, on the basis of scientific quality and novelty. At the symposium, 30 minutes will be devoted to each paper, with papers presented by the author(s) and commented on by a discussant, followed by open discussion.

The following schedule will be followed:

- 15 October 2011: deadline for abstract submissions (nor more than 250 words) to:  
[governanceofadaptation@ivm.vu.nl](mailto:governanceofadaptation@ivm.vu.nl).
- 1 December 2011: notification of acceptance/rejection. Communication with details about venue and lodging options.
- 1 February 2012: draft program online
- 1 March 2012: full papers due.
- 22/23 March 2012: meeting in Amsterdam

## Biographical notes on the conveners and additional information

	<p>Frans Berkhout is director of the Institute for Environmental Studies at the VU University Amsterdam (<a href="http://www.vu.nl/ivm">www.vu.nl/ivm</a>) and Professor of Innovation and Sustainability.</p>
	<p>Dave Huitema is Associate Professor Environmental Policy Analysis at VU University Amsterdam and coordinator for research on Adaptive Governance there (<a href="http://ivm30.ivm.vu.nl/adaptivegovernance/">http://ivm30.ivm.vu.nl/adaptivegovernance/</a>).</p>
	<p>Katrien Termeer is Professor of Public Administration at Wageningen UR (<a href="http://www.pap.wur.nl/UK/">http://www.pap.wur.nl/UK/</a>) and leader of the Governance of Adaptation consortium.</p>
	<p>The symposium takes place in the context of the Dutch government funded research program Knowledge for Climate, and more specifically the consortium responsible for the work on governance in that program. You can more information here <a href="http://knowledgeforclimate.climate researchnetherlands.nl/">http://knowledgeforclimate.climate researchnetherlands.nl/</a></p> <p>The consortium is a collaboration of five Dutch Universities:</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>WAGENINGEN UR For quality of life</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Erasmus ERASMUS UNIVERSITEIT ROTTERDAM</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; margin-top: 20px;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Universiteit Utrecht</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>vrije Universiteit amsterdam</p> </div> </div>