

Institutions for adaptation: Is the Dutch institutional structure capable of adapting to climate change?

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Context / Social problem

The research will investigate, in a variety of ways, how Dutch society can adapt to climate change. Ecosystems and wildlife may need another type of National Ecological Network; more space is needed for water, and building plans may have to be moved to different areas. It is one thing to think of solutions, but will the Dutch authorities, companies and other organisations be able to carry them through?

What is already known, and what is not?

The climate problem has several specific characteristics:

- It has implications on all scales: global, EU, national, regional and local
- It has implications over very long time horizons, such as 50, 100 or 200 years into the future
- There are still uncertainties about the scale of the impacts of climate change

Can the present administrative structure in the Netherlands cope with these issues? Many public authorities are trying to shape their policies in greater consultation with a range of civil society organisations ('from government to governance'). Does this interactive policy style lend itself to a problem such as climate change? Moreover, we know that it is not easy for different ministries and policy departments to work together on the development of an integral policy, whereas this seems to be an indispensable requirement for adapting to climate change. For example, adaptation of the water management regime will require so much land that proposed measures will have to be drawn up in

consultation with other social sectors. What administrative arrangements have already been made to do this?

What is being studied?

The project is working on the concept of 'institutions', which we understand to mean the rules and principles for conducting public life. Institutions can be organisations, but also laws and informal codes of conduct. The study will first develop a framework for assessing the adaptive capacity of a system of national institutions. This framework will then be applied to the Dutch administrative system. The research will look at four sectors: nature, water, agriculture and spatial planning.

What are the results, and who are they for?

The result will be a diagnosis of the adaptive capacity of Dutch institutions. The main problem areas have been described and some initial solutions have been identified.

