

Societal aspects

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1. Relevance of the research programme for national and regional adaptation policies

The research themes that will be addressed in the WPs are directly relevant to national and regional adaptation policies. Since climate adaptation is a relatively new policy field, governments are still developing and searching for governance strategies.

Regional and local governments have often taken the lead in regional climate mitigation initiatives and are now facing the practical challenges of developing the new policy field of climate adaptation. They have to cope with vested interests of industries, farmers and individual citizens, and the complexity of existing (inter)national regulations. Climate adaptation considerations cut across developments and decisions in a number of other domains like water management, urban development or nature conservation. How can the necessary connections be established between these policy fields, when faced with long term uncertainties and a public opinion divided between climate optimists and pessimists? How to deal with the future need for water storage when redeveloping an urban area? How to reach conservation targets or develop new nature areas when the future habitats for certain species are moving north? Climate adaptation challenges also raise questions about how to (re)allocate the costs, benefits and risks of climate impacts. Can public-private partnerships be useful in domains like water storage or flood protection, which are now largely administered by public actors? Developing adaptation policies that work, that are acceptable to society and that do not get in the way of future adaptation efforts are practical but daunting challenges for local and regional governments today. The four central WPs of this program aim exactly at addressing this kind of questions.

The national government has already started many initiatives and infrastructural investments and faces similar questions regarding the roles, tasks and responsibilities of government, civil society and the market in realizing climate adaptation. When should the national government undertake actions, and which actions could be taken by (organized) citizens and private actors when it comes to – for example – the availability of freshwater? Should the public authorities take the final responsibility for damage by flooding, for example, or can private parties be encouraged to manage the risks by themselves through new forms of insurance? Another key question the national government faces is which level of government should take the lead for which adaptation issues? How should cooperation between the levels of government be organized to maximise economies of scale and minimize unnecessary centralisation and red tape? In complex areas such as the South-Western Delta or the Wadden Sea this type of questions is highly relevant and is until now not answered effectively. Finally, the national government faces the challenge of designing multi-level

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governance processes to implement the national adaptation strategy or the recommendations of the new Delta Commission. This program aims to develop such governance arrangements.

In sum, this programme will be highly relevant for

- ▽ incorporating climate adaptation into sectoral policies
- ▽ integrated area based planning processes
- ▽ regional climate proofing initiatives
- ▽ development of new policy instruments
- ▽ the National Adaptation Agenda
- ▽ the Delta commission recommendations

2. Involvement of stakeholders

Involvement of stakeholders has started already during the second phase of the Knowledge for Climate selection procedure, when a full proposal has being worked out. At this stage projects were defined and co-financing was sought together with hotspot partners. In this phase it was crucial to identify practical challenges of climate adaptation in the hotspots for which broad ownership exists and that could serve as anchors for the different projects. Knowledge questions and practical issues have been connected into concrete projects that create scientific and practical added value.

The methodological approach of collaborative action research couples research with intervention at the different steps in the process. Collaborative research starts from a joint assessment among 'researchers' and 'researched' of how the central problems should be defined. In this case, hotspots will be invited to give their views from the start, to jointly develop an action research strategy with researchers and to participate in the interpretation of the results. This also includes planning and implementing actions (in this case for regional climate adaptation) and documenting how these actions proceed and what they result in, in order to take new and better-informed actions. For each project in the hotspots a project team will be set up with key stakeholders and researchers.

Concretely, the following stepwise process will serve as a guideline for organizing researcher (RS) – stakeholder (SH) interaction in the hotspot projects. To facilitate cooperation, researchers can be based at a hotspot organization for a period of time.

- Step 1. (RS+SH) Conformation of the mixed project team and initial problem assessment
- Step 2. (RS) Review of relevant knowledge and collection of baseline data
- Step 3. (RS+SH) Collaborative design of options, combining practical and theoretical knowledge
- Step 4. (SH) Implementation of strategies
- Step 5. (RS) Monitoring of implementation process and results
- Step 6. (RS+SH) Joint evaluation of practical results
- Step 7. (RS) Data analysis and conclusions
- Step 9. (HS+SH) Discussion of lessons for practice and remaining questions in workshop
- Step 10. (RS) Presentation and publication of results in national and international scientific fora

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In sum, stakeholders will be involved and supported during project implementation in the following ways:

- ▽ stakeholder will be involved in defining project questions and outcomes
- ▽ workshops and training sessions for stakeholders will be organized about the results
- ▽ researchers will act as sparring partners for stakeholders
- ▽ stakeholders will have access to the 'governance helpdesk'
- ▽ through direct consulting specific practical issues will be tackled
- ▽ exchanges between national and international hotspots will be organized for mutual learning and benchmarking

3. Knowledge transfer and valorisation

Dissemination of insights, methods and research results will occur at multiple levels. To ensure an effective exchange and transfer of knowledge, dissemination will be a joint effort between the consortium partners and subcontracted communication professionals.

The first level is that of the governmental authorities, knowledge institutes, NGO's and private parties directly involved in the program. In accordance with our approach of action research, dissemination and valorisation of knowledge will not be an activity at the end of the program, but a continuous effort. Through the governance help desk, a central website on governance of adaptation, tailor made workshops and close working contacts in the project teams, we will secure ongoing valorisation of knowledge aligned to the different hot spots.

The second level of dissemination and valorisation combines insights and methods generated at hotspot level, through gathering, comparing and integrating knowledge about best practices across the different projects and regions. These will be disseminated through the different professional networks of the involved stakeholders (e.g. Association of Netherlands Municipalities, Union of Water Boards, etc.). We will also work with the Ministries of VROM, V&W and LNV, and the Environmental Assessment Agency, to organise conferences and workshops on national governance strategies of adaptation, visualising the complexities and impacts of various governance challenges, discussing governance scenarios of adaptation and addressing crucial topics like agenda setting, coherence and integration.

We acknowledge the risk for the subject of climate change adaptation to remain enclosed in expert networks at governmental, business and NGO level. So the third level of dissemination is directed towards the broader public. The workshops and conferences on both regional and national strategies will be communicated in a transparent way to be understood by a wider public. Communication professionals will be hired to design innovative and effective ways of disseminating knowledge to different target groups (e.g. local press releases, interactive websites, movies, installations at regional events, etc.). Connections with existing national and local initiatives that address climate change will be sought to reach a wider audience.

A fourth level of dissemination will take the form of scientific and professional presentations and publications, as indicated in the different work packages. Together with the international partners the consortium will organize panels at international conferences, international workshops and an international conference. Research results will be made publicly available as much as possible, through open access publications and a working paper series on the governance of climate adaptation.

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Finally, in these ways, new scientific insights will reach fellow academics and interested practitioners, but are also expected to make their way into regular and postgraduate curricula, thereby becoming part of the training of the future professionals that will address the long term challenge of climate adaptation. This consortium will also develop a tailor made advanced training programme for professionals dealing with climate adaptation governance.