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Navigating climate change ambiguity

Frame interactions in puzzling over ideas and powering over interests



Understanding governance of adaptation: making sense of frame differences

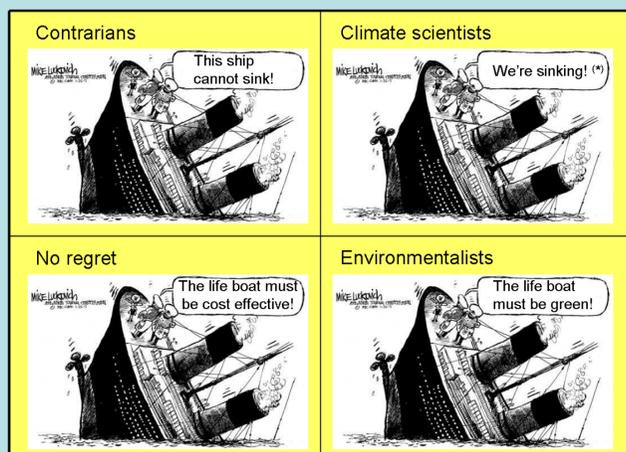
- The aim of our research is to gain understanding of how to realize effective, and durable adaptation strategies in a process of powering over interests and puzzling over ideas with diverging frames, within and between governments, businesses scientists, societal actors and the media.

Case studies

- A national state committee on flood safety in context of climate adaptation (the **Delta Committee**)
- The committee's successor, a national programme on climate adaptation (the **Delta Programme Lake IJssel**)
- A consortium of **regional governments** in the north or the Netherlands working towards climate adaptation measures towards 2050.

Climate change: a hot potato

Media events like 'Climate Gate' and the revealing of 'IPCC errors' made climate change a 'hot potato' on the political agenda. The variety of **understandings** of what 'is' and what 'ought to be', or frames (Schön and Rein 1994) not only hampers collective action, with uncertainty on future climate impacts, ambiguity may become a reason not to act at all. A textbook example of a wicked problem (Rittel and Webber 1973) in which puzzling over **ideas** and powering over **interests** risks to strand in **Babylonian confusion**. Therefore the question is how to make sense of the wide variety of frames and their role in shaping climate adaptation governance.



Depolitization risks societal apathy

- After climate change became controversial adaptation **issues are no longer being framed as 'climate issues'**.
- Policymakers tend to frame adaptation issues as 'technical' or 'procedural', avoiding renewed political controversy.
- This **depolitization empowers the role for technicians, experts and bureaucrats**.
- But regional and local societal representatives feel uncomfortable in 'showing their cards' in a 'technical' or 'bureaucratic' game they do not master.
- This indicates a **risk for decreased legitimacy** and emerging apathy among representatives and decision-makers.



- The challenge is to bring political power back in, avoiding polarization.



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