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From co-production of knowledge to a participatory governance concept: a research design focusing on knowledge practices in flood risk management and disaster risk reduction

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Knowledge has been shown to be more effectively implemented in practice when produced in collaboration between researchers and other stakeholders as the co-produced knowledge is more likely to be accepted and found relevant. Knowledge co-production processes have however been found guilty of depoliticizing and hiding political struggles to the end of reinforcing existing unequal power relations and prevent broad societal transformation from taking place. From this perspective, knowledge co-production can come into conflict with participatory governance that focuses on the empowerment and capacity building of actors, social justice and advocacy. In this presentation I take a closer look at this conflictual perspective and propose a research focus on knowledge practices for exploring and analyzing participatory governance options for flood risk management (FRM) and disaster risk reduction (DRR). I do this by exemplifying and presenting a research design developed within the newly started PARADeS-project.

The PARADeS-project is a research project led by German research institutions in close collaboration with partners in Ghana and with the overall aim to contribute to enhancing Ghana's national flood risk and disaster management strategy. Co-production of knowledge is foreseen to take place in several workshops including collaborative modelling, scenario- and policy back-casting exercises. One of the planned project outputs is a concept of participatory governance in FRM and DRR based on the findings from a stakeholder analysis, a policy network analysis and a participatory assessment of different policy options.

In this project context a research focus on stakeholders' knowledge practices can be used to inform and improve the participatory governance concept and facilitate its implementation process. Knowledge is used by stakeholders as a powerful resource in suggesting certain policy options and convincing others of their necessity. Knowledge practices entail how actors use knowledge to argue, convince and make decisions. Through knowledge practices, stakeholders decide what knowledge to base decisions on and how to convince others of their position using that knowledge. What knowledge becomes accepted as legitimate in such interactions - often deliberative settings - can be decisive for the acceptability of any policy option. It is therefore important to study not only the different types of stakeholders and technical options for FRM and DRR, but the interaction between stakeholders and how they use information and co-create

knowledge - the knowledge practices.

Within the presentation I discuss the proposed research design for how to study knowledge practices and how to make use of these findings when going from research project and co-production of knowledge to a concept of participatory governance in flood risk management and disaster risk reduction in Ghana.