



Lessons learned from a trans-disciplinary climate adaptation project

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Seven key and dozens of associated project partners develop an integrated climate adaptation program for the Greater Dresden area in the joint research project REGKLAM (BMBF-KLIMZUG framework). The cooperation of science, economy and administration fosters the feasibility of proposed adaptation measures. Yet, it is confronted with many challenges, like different knowledge backgrounds, methods, tools, priorities, objectives and communication styles of the partners. Three key lessons were identified that future projects on climate adaptation might wish to consider, related to communication, education and development.

Communication: A critical success factor lies in putting a large effort into attaining a common understanding of project objectives and the way to approach them. Demonstrating the benefits of investing time in communication helps to overcome individual resistance towards intensive communication. We made positive experience with moderated workshops, where every participant is invited to share her or his understanding of the topic and ideas of approaching it with the others, and with social events that enhance personal contacts between project members.

Education: Adaptation can be successful when related options are properly evaluated and interpreted. We noticed a considerably need to educate practitioners in opportunities and limitations of using climate model outputs for their decisions. Common misunderstandings include i) the difference between weather (forecast) and climate (projection), ii) the misinterpretation of climate model outputs as climate data and iii) the related lack of understanding on how to deal with uncertainties and bandwidths of projected future climate.

Development: Strategies of regional administration authorities and companies involve much more than climate adaptation. For them, projects which only focus on climate change aspects are of limited use. Yet, integrating development aspects, such as demography, land-use, infrastructure, technology, economy, etc., may overburden a climate adaptation project.

We suggest turning away from the “climate first” strategy and to apply instead a “development first” strategy that integrates climate mitigation and adaptation in its framework.