



How do governance structures affect climate change adaptation policies?

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Climate change is one of the greatest challenges that society is facing today (Tromans 2007: 357) and there are two complementary paths that society can go to address it: mitigation and adaptation. However, Stern notes that mitigation will have only a minor effect in reducing the cost of climate change over the next fifty years whereas adaptation is the only measure to do so now (Stern 2007: 319). Thus, there is a genuine interest in studying climate change adaptation and policies which implement adaptation. There are different aspects which may influence these policies. At the very least there are scientific uncertainties. At the same time the implementation of adaptation policies may also depend on governance structures for adaptation policies. Given this background, the research will investigate the question how governance structures in certain EU Member States may influence the type of climate change adaptation policy that is occurring. The basic idea is to first consider the national framework for adaptation in each Member State. Then the research will explore the adaptive responses of one region in each of the Member States. Finally, it will consider the governance structures of one local community in that region. The interest behind the question is to see (a) whether governance structures at a local level are similar in different Member States for the same regulated areas and (b) whether responses to climate change are similar in different Member States. One important omission of this research is that it does not estimate to which extent scientific uncertainties instead of governance structures influence the differences in Member States' adaptation responses. However, its main contribution is that it will investigate how the institutional context may affect the structure of adaptation policies and the handling of scientific uncertainties which are the same for each Member State.

Given that this research considers how governance structures affect climate change adaptation policies it will also address the question of what factors influence the establishment and design of governance structures for climate change adaptation policies. It will notably do so by asking whether governance structures at a local level are similar in different EU Member States for the same regulated areas. Posing this question, the research will study the question whether it is institutional factors that influence the establishment and design of governance structures. Here, institutions can be understood as in general sociology as 'organized, established, procedure[s]' (Jepperson 1991:143). Additionally, the question of whether responses to climate change are similar in different Member States puts emphasis on the institutional context in which adaptation policies evolve. Thus, answering this question will also contribute to the question what factors affect the establishment and design of governance structures as an answer will one more time underscore to which extent the institutional context matters or not. The question of whether institutional factors affect the establishment and design of governance structures for climate change adaptation policies is relevant in order to support a better understanding of how national adaptation strategies can be implemented effectively.