

When climate change enters an entrenched science policy interface: knowledge production for climate adaptation policy in the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

As the consequences of climate change are starting to become manifest, ever more adaptation projects emerge. In the northern part of the Netherlands, a group of regional civil servants and hydrological experts make an assessment of the climate impacts on the regional water system to organise policy response. Considering the long standing tradition of Dutch water management, one would expect a routinized science policy interface.

In this paper take an institutional perspective on the notion of co-production advanced by Jasanoff and others, claiming that the way in which we know our environment is inextricably entangled with social order. We do an in-depth case study of this regional assessment project to understand how knowledge production for climate adaptation is produced. Also, we study whether science-policy relations are becoming more interdisciplinary, participatory and more reflexive as suggested by climate change literature. Our case study is based on participatory observations of project meetings, semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

We find on interface with puzzling civil servants and hydrologists constantly negotiating both the organisation of the knowledge production as well as knowledge itself. We observe two substantial and two organizational reductions in order to handle climate change in the water governance process. We conclude that the construction of climate knowledge claims is not neutral, but dependent upon the local constellation. We then discuss the cautious steps in this project towards engaging changing science-policy relations.

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