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Institutions for Adaptation to Climate Change: Comparing National Adaptation Strategies in Europe

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Abstract

In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, societies worldwide have to cope with the potential impacts of climate change. The central question of this paper is to what extent our historically grown institutions enable actors to cope with the new challenges of climate adaptation. We present six qualities of governance institutions that are crucial to allow for, and encourage adaptation, and apply them to the National Adaptation Strategies of the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Finland and Sweden. We conclude that although the governance institutions involved seem to have the basic qualities required, they face five institutional weaknesses, causing tensions on the long term: (1) lack of openness towards learning and variety; (2) strong one-sided reliance on scientific experts; (3) tension between top-down policy development and bottom-up implementation; (4) distrust in the problem-solving capacity of civil society; and (5) wickedness of reserving funding for long-term action.

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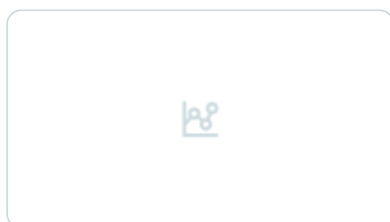
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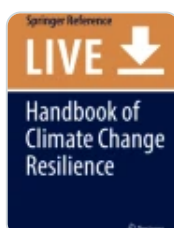
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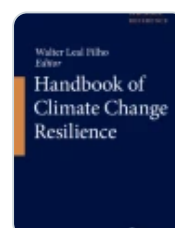
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Notes

1. This paper has been written within the Dutch Climate Changes Spatial Planning Programme, and more specifically within the project ‘Institutions for Adaptation: Are Dutch Institutions Capable of Adapting to Climate Change (IC12)’. Moreover, we gratefully made use of the results of the Partnership for European Environmental Research (PEER) project ‘Europe Adapts to Climate Change: Comparing National Adaptation Strategies’.

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Author information

Authors and Affiliations

Wageningen University, Leeuwenborch building, Hollandseweg 1, Wageningen, 6706 KN, The Netherlands

Catrien Termeer, Robbert Biesbroek & Margo van den Brink



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