

Back to the future: Viewing a 1992 flood risk study through a 2017 lens

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Abstract

Here we examine whether a study conducted 25 years ago (1992) would have had different conclusions if concepts and analytical methods developed since then had been used. The 1992 problem was to identify a strategy for reducing flood risk in the Netherlands by, for example, strengthening the river dikes against the risk of flooding. Since then, conditions related to flooding have been recognised as increasingly uncertain. In response, a new paradigm for strategic planning has emerged: the “adaptive planning approach,” which aims to identify and assess strategies allowing for change, learning, and adaptation over time. We found that using the adaptive planning approach in 1992 would not have changed the main conclusions. But, it would have made explicit the need for the identification of vulnerabilities of the chosen strategy, a monitoring system to keep track of the uncertainties, and the possible actions to deal with the vulnerabilities that can be taken as the world evolves.

Keywords:

adaptive strategies, deep uncertainty, flood risks, retrospective analysis

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