

Resilient flood risk strategies: institutional preconditions for implementation

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Abstract

There is a growing recognition of resilience enhancement as an additional objective for adaptation. This will typically involve enhancing the preparedness and capacity to respond to the impacts of climate change. Within flood risk practice, resilient strategies focus on reducing impacts from flooding through better prevention and preparedness. Such strategies will not only reduce existing risk levels, but could also make the social-ecological system more robust for extreme flood events. This is because they seek to prevent those impacts on the system from which recovery is extremely difficult without outside help. Besides that, resilient strategies increase the prospect for the realization of cobenefits, particularly when measures are selected within the spatial domain. Implementing resilient strategies, however, faces many difficulties, particularly in countries like the Netherlands and Poland where prevalent governance arrangements are aimed to facilitate resistant strategies, focusing exclusively on flood protection. We analyzed these implementation difficulties for the Island of Dordrecht, which is a front-runner case of resilient flood risk governance in the Netherlands. A theoretical framework based on relevant issues regarding governance arrangements was used to reflect on the identified gaps and barriers. Although all issues played a role in the case study, there seem to be no generic institutional design parameters that have to be applied for implementing resilient strategies. Even in the current institutional regime, it is possible to find ways of implementing a resilient strategy. The more general institutional precondition has to do with the political willingness to allow for collaboration and experimentation and to enable a more flexible use of current principles and rules.

Keywords: adaptation, flood risk governance, institutional feasibility, resilience, system robustness.

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