

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Reflection 3 by Camille Nollet

27.03 Lecture: Sirkku Juhola, Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Aalto University.

Adaptation in Europe case: Impacts and costs in adaptation to changing climate.

(Pre-reading material related to the lecture topic: Biesbroek, G.R., Swart, R.J., Carter T.R. etc. 2010. Europe adapts to climate change: Comparing National Adaptation Strategies. *Global Environmental Change* 20:440-450).

“Even if we change, we’ll have to adapt”. This sentence, from Sirkku Juhola, has drawn my attention and told us, from the starting point, that adaptation is not optional. Even if actions are taken to avoid climate change, the process is already set up. Reduction of carbon emissions, for example, may lead to lower changes and maybe an easier adaptation, but still we will have to adapt, to face the already happening changes.

Adaptation to climate change can have various definitions. Füssel, in 2007, has defined it as “actions undertaken to reduce risks and capitalize on the opportunities associated with global climate change”. Reducing risks is the main aim of adaptation, while capitalizing on opportunities is more what to gain from climate change. E.g. capacity to grow more things in the North, due to the global warming. In both cases, governance is necessary. It should be a continuous process with global/local issues, not only facing physical vulnerabilities, but also social vulnerabilities, from people at different levels. This interesting dynamic should answer questions such as who should be involved and how.

Adaptation management would need to be at different levels, resulting from combination between problem stream, policy stream and political stream (Kingdon 1984). At the international level, the EU White Paper on adaptation outlines has been written. However it has come quite late compared to actions taken nationally in some countries. The important point of measures is not to create new policies but to integrate adaptation into existing policies. In that way, I think that adaptation actions can be better included and accepted by diverse sectors. At the national level, many European countries have taken measures, with different approaches of management between countries. These various adaptation strategies with levels of adaptation might reflect some different views of the

problem, but also different impacts of climate change between countries. The first country to react was Finland, followed by others and with UK which has become the leading country in term of adaptation. Most EU countries focus their adaptation on landscape and water management, with a big importance for food security and agriculture in central Europe. Differences between countries are important, as well as differences within countries. Indeed, even with a national adaptation, regional adaptation is necessary. The national level is not reflecting regional realities, thus regional adaptation strategies vary between areas, and sometimes even between cities. Moreover, adaptation can have a stronger relation to other issues at a local level.

Strategic plans are, then, essential. These plans must take into account interests of various stakeholders. The scenario workshop was really interesting to show us concretely how complicated it can be to make decisions, and how solutions can be benefic for some and bad for others. All views have to be heard to try to find a balance between various interests, which will be beneficial in the whole system.