

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE: A CASE STUDY ON RIVERINE FLOOD RISKS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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Abstract

Climate change may lead to an increased risk of river floods in the Netherlands. However, the impacts of changes in water management are even larger, whether enhancing or reducing flood risks. Therefore, the abilities of water management authorities to learn that climate and river flows are changing, and to recognise and act upon the implications are of crucial importance. At the same time, water management authorities respond to other trends, such as the democratisation of decision making, which alter their ability to react to climate change. This complex of interactions is illustrated with changes in river flood risk management for the Rhine and the Meuse in the Netherlands over the last 50 years. A scenario study is used to seek insight into the question whether current water management institutions and their likely successors are capable of dealing with plausible future flood risks. Structural solutions to future flood risks are feasible, but require considerable political will and institutional reform.

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