



Institutional Barriers and Knowledge in Local Policies to Integrate Climate Adaptation

Anne Jensen, Helle Ørsted Nielsen & Anders Branth Pedersen, Department of Environmental Sciences, Aarhus University, Denmark.

ABSTRACT

The policy paradigm of sustainable development and the eco-modernistic ideas of win-win have over the past years gained a companion in visions of societal transition as a response to major environmental challenges. Among these challenges, climate change is prominent and the impacts of a changing climate are experienced at local to global scales, posing fundamental challenges for public policy. In Danish local governance, the position of different forms of knowledge in the framing of policy actions to adapt to climate change have changed, accompanied by a national adaptation strategy, including a national decision that all municipalities must make a climate adaptation strategy to manage impacts, especially flooding. This study examines the institutional barriers and innovative options for adapting to climate change in local governance in Denmark. Using theories of climate policy integration in local level policies and of the role of knowledge in framing adaptive policy actions, questions of knowledge in policy integration and further of institutional conditions for proactive adaptation policies are examined. The study is based on case studies in five coastal areas, supplemented by a survey among all Danish municipalities. The study shows how the level of maturity of local governance networks that involve especially local business and local water companies promotes development of adaptive policies with potential for reaching beyond local environmental policies. Significantly, the ways in which relevant and apt forms of knowledge were included in policy processes across sectors differed across diverse policy environments and influenced the design and comprehensiveness of local adaptation strategies, with the larger municipalities appearing better equipped to manage the impacts of climate change. (264 words)