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Title of presentation: Institutions, adaptation and the IAD framework: A systematic review of IAD elements in the climate adaptation scholarship

Abstract

In the last decade, “institutional analysis” has gained prominence in the study of environmental problems. Yet, what is exactly an “institutional analysis”? Some may think of it as a piece of scholarly work characterized by models, theories and frameworks connected with the work of scholars such as Elinor and Vincent Ostrom, building on the legacy of Thorstein Veblen, Mancur Olson, and Ronald Coase (among others). Call that an “Institutional Analysis”. Others may look at it simply as a study of institutions, whatever the conceptual and methodological toolbox applied thereby. Call that an “institutional analysis”. Obviously, “Institutional Analyses” are always “institutional analyses”. The opposite is not always the case, though.

The present paper assesses the gap between “Institutional Analyses” and “institutional analyses”, aiming at those scholarly articles which de facto address institutions, but do so from outside the conceptual space of institutional economics. It does so with reference to the literature on climate adaptation, where “Institutional Analyses” are rare but “institutional analyses” are plenty. Scholars of climate adaptation have quickly recognized the institutional dimension of their study object, devoting a conspicuous amount of attention to the link between how actors interact and how adaptation comes about. Yet, analyses relying on the concepts from institutional economics are not common.

Against this state of affairs, the present paper attempts to provide guidance to institutional economists intending to deliver “Institutional Analyses” of climate adaptation. Taking the Institutional Analysis and Development framework as a benchmark, the paper spells out the key elements of an “Institutional Analysis” and subsequently explores their consideration within those articles representing “institutional analyses” of climate adaptation. More precisely, it performs a systematic review of the adaptation literature, addressing the (research) question of which elements of the IAD were already granted substantial attention by adaptation scholars, as opposed to those belonging to uncharted territories.

Results show that “institutional analyses” of climate adaptation tend so far to address collective choice questions among public actors, focusing on rules-in-use and social interactions while neglecting the role of biophysical conditions and physical interaction. Furthermore, the consideration for the different IAD elements varies with the evaluative criteria articles focus on, with a stronger focus on biophysical conditions and operational choice among articles addressing vulnerability as opposed to those assessing adaptation from the point of view of learning, coordination or cooperation. Scholars intending to advance the “Institutional Analysis” of climate adaptation can thus focus on operational choice questions, adaptation by private actors and the role of biophysical conditions for public actors in collective choice situations.

Short bio

Dr. Matteo Roggero was involved in the FP6 Marie Curie Research and Training Network GoverNat (Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung - UFZ Leipzig) and worked as a project manager in the TEEB project (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity, Helmholtz-Zentrum für Umweltforschung-UFZ Leipzig). Since 2012 he is postdoc in the Division of Resource Economics, working on adaptation to climate change. He contributed to the econCCadapt project (BMBF, Ökonomie des Klimawandels I) by analyzing the institutional dimensions of adaptation to climate change in German municipalities. He is currently coordinating the PolyGreen project (BMBF), addressing nature based solutions in cities.