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WINS Seminar

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Title of presentation: Adapting water governance in river basins to climate change: archetypical barriers

Abstract

Are institutions adaptable to changing conditions? One reason for adaptation are the impacts of climate change. Ample case study evidence yet shows that substantial barriers hamper collective action in climate change adaptation. However, generalizable patterns of how and why barriers arise remain scarce. The study adopts a collective action perspective and utilizes the archetypes approach in a meta-analysis of 26 primary studies to explain how barriers are generated through adverse mechanisms in specific conditions of social-ecological systems. We focus on adaptation of water governance in river basins, and find six kinds of mechanisms that generate barriers: coordination gaps, path dependencies, zero-sum games, uncertainties, competing priorities and tangible constraints. All mechanisms are characterized by identifiable conditions, with particular implications for collective action. The paper precisely introduces the archetypes approach, and shows limitations of the institutional fit heuristic when conditions permanently change in the longrun.

Short bio

Klaus Eisenack is professor for resource economics at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. He is known for his research on adaptation to climate change, climate governance, and the energy transition. His research focuses on the co-evolution of resources and institutions, with modeling of institutional arrangements and natural resource management being further research interests. He was professor for economics at Carl von Ossietzky University Oldenburg, Germany, from 2008 to 2016, and scientist at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK) from 2001 to 2008. He led Chameleon Research Group on adapting infrastructure to climate change (2008-2014), and was head of the Oldenburg Center for Sustainability Economics and Management (2012-2016). He consults organizations on the European level and in Germany, and is active in public understanding of science (in particular with the climate change game Keep Cool).