

Flood Resilient City

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There is a growing international recognition that flood risk management in optima forma should be a programmed and flexible process of continuously improving management practices by active learning about the outcome of earlier and ongoing interventions and drivers of change. In the Netherlands, such a long-term, adaptive flood risk management strategy is now being implemented. This so-called second Delta Program aims to identify and exploit opportunities and capitalize on short-term benefits and opportunistic synergies that arise from change and will require adaptive policymaking. It also requires the financial and institutional means to operate in a long-lasting way, which at the very least, means engaging stakeholders, gathering and disseminating results and adaptation of future plans.

Frontrunners cities in climate adaptation and flood risk management such as Rotterdam and Dordrecht have an important role to play in operationalizing and implementing an adaptive flood risk management as they are providing important lessons and will contribute insights for other cities that attempting to reform their flood risk management strategies.

This presentation will briefly elaborate on the basic principles of the Dutch Delta Program followed by a more detailed analysis of recent experiences and challenges of Dordrecht and Rotterdam with implementing an adaptive flood risk management approach. This analysis reveals that a reframing of the paradigm of planned adaptation from its primary focus on mitigating the impacts of climate change such as (extreme) flood events using stand alone interventions to an integrated, broader and long-term focus on increasing the performance of the city or community in which the investment c.q. interventions are to take place, is needed. Transferring an adaptive management approach to cities to become more flood resilient is a major challenge that calls for fundamental changes in institutional arrangements at various levels and thus requires customized programs for strategic institutional change. Continuous monitoring and evaluation and sharing international experiences will become crucial for the effective delivery and wider uptake of these new strategies around the globe.