

## **Abstract for International Symposium “Governance of Adaptation”, March 22-23, 2012**

### **Title**

Regional adaptive capacity in Europe: A framework for assessing adaptive capacity

### **Paper 89**

### **Abstract**

The assessment of regional vulnerability to climate change has become a central issue in the policy-science interface of adaptation. In order to aid decision-making, e.g. prioritise adaptation action and allocate investments in adaptation measures both scholars and policy makers emphasise the need of comprehensive and spatially explicit vulnerability studies. Adaptive capacity is not only an important part of vulnerability assessments; it also underlies and enables the governing of adaptation activities. Accordingly, the assessment of adaptive capacity gives decision-makers on international, national and regional level important information to plan and realise adaptive action. Based on experiences from current vulnerability studies, this paper develops a framework which structures adaptive capacity assessments based on the science-policy interaction. Given that different assessment designs lead to different kinds of results, we argue that in order to realise the full potential of these assessments, a number of decisions concerning the objectives of the assessment, the methodology and the use of results need to be made. The framework is applied using data from two studies: a pan-European assessment of adaptive capacity on NUTS3 level and a case study assessing the adaptive capacity of the tourism sector in the Alpine space. By applying the framework, this paper compares the assessment designs and the results of these two studies and thus illustrates how different assessment designs have strengths and shortcomings. In conclusion, the paper argues that the recognition of inherent shortcomings of different assessments is necessary in order to better support the mobilisation of adaptive capacity for governance of adaptation.

### **Keywords**

Adaptive capacity, climate change, policy-science interface, vulnerability assessment