



KEYNOTE SPEAKER



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EVOLUTION OF WEST EUROPEAN RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT

The evolution of West European river basin management can be characterized by three phases. The first phase was dominated by an engineering approach directed on bridling the river system and controlling natural processes. Disadvantages of this “man against nature” approach were the unexpected side effects on the long term that resulted in increased flood risks, a deteriorated fluvial system and high management costs. These drawbacks promoted gradually the transition to the second phase of river basin management focusing on land use adaptation rather than “fighting the water”. The increased number of fluvial floods that hit Europe in the nineties accelerated the transition to this “adaptation phase” of river basin management. Typical outcomes of this “adaptation phase” are the Netherlands “Ruimte voor de Rivier” (Room for the River”) program and the German “Integriertes Rheinprogramm” (Integrated Rhine Program). Although the “adaptation strategy” is now widely accepted, the national authorities are still coping with high realisations costs and varying public support for local measures.

Inspired by some European projects on flood protection and public involvement a number of experiments along the Rhine tributaries in The Netherlands were started 6 years ago. These experiments were focusing on co-creation with local stakeholders and making use of the *genius loci* in the land use design process. These co-creation experiments are facilitated by governmental organisations and knowledge institutes and are focusing on a) raising awareness of the wider public with respect to natural dynamics and climate change, b) enabling people to make their own flood-proof land use designs and c) identifying innovative financing mechanisms for sustainable river basin management. A mid-term evaluation indicates that on the long term this new strategy is promising in enabling local stakeholders to resolve complex conflicts in land use and sustainable river basin management. During this key-note we will dwell on the experiences so far and discuss the conditions that goes along with a successful co-creation approach.