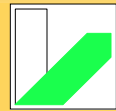


The Political Ecology of Adaptation to Climate Change in South Korea

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Background

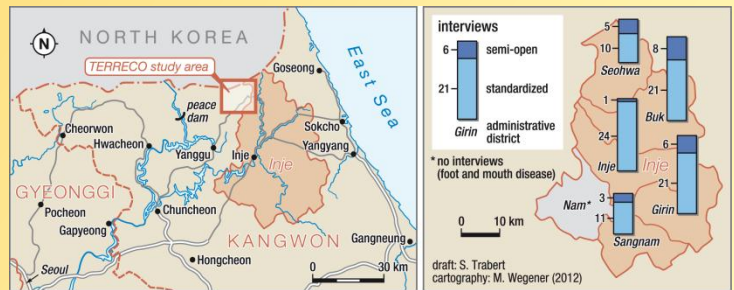
Political Ecology is a theoretical approach that stresses the political dimension of environmental problems, including the notion of power and space. The focus is on the participating actors, their strategies and their actions regarding environmental issues (Robbins 2004). One particular concern is to examine the contradictions and tensions between different actors. A recent example of this is the politics of climate change adaptation (Pelling 2010). In this case, politics does not alone respond to climate projections but is driven by other political or economic interests.

Objectives

- Who are the actors in the politics of climate change adaptation in South Korea with respect to agriculture?
- What is the relationship between actors on the national and local scale?
- How can the divergences between national actors and farmers in Inje County of Gangwon Province be explained?

Methodology

- Actor-Network-Theory
- Ethnographic methods (expert interviews and participant observation in respective governmental institutions in Seoul, Suwon and Chuncheon)
- Document analysis
- In Inje County: standardized and semi-structured interviews with farmers



Results National Scale South Korea

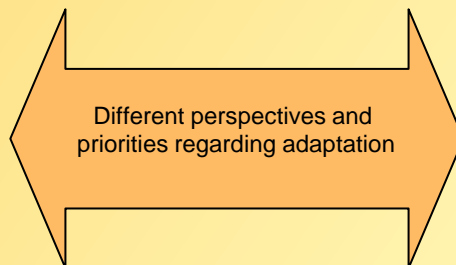
Actors:
Ministry of Environment, Rural Development Administration, Korean Adaptation Center for Climate Change

'Adaptation' to climate change means:

- Stable income for farmers
- Diversification of income
- New crop types
- Training of farmers in South-East Asia

Implementation of goals by:

- Agricultural training
- Subsidies (greenhouses)
- Insurance (in case of environmental disaster)



National

Local

Climate change as a major driver

New technologies and crop diversification requested

Climate change less important than prices and investments

Investments and changes in cultivation methods are difficult to realize

Local Scale Inje County

Actors:
Farmers, Officers of the Extension Service

Ranking of influencing factors in the farming business:

- 1st rank: Price of crops
- 2nd rank: Investments
- 3rd rank: Climate Factors
- 4th rank: Subsidies
- 5th rank: Neighbor's decisions

Implementation tools relevant?

- Participation at agricultural training (87% of farmers)
- Subsidies (80% of farmers)
- Insurance in case of environmental disaster (only 10% of farmers)

Explanations for the different perspectives

- focus of national policy on the reputation in international climate change politics
- demographic structure of Gangwon Province and Inje County
- uncertain future of farms due to missing farm successor
- different time frame of climate change adaptation

Conclusion

This case study shows that adaptation to climate change as a strategy to deal with climate change has a different meaning for central governmental actors and farmers. While the South Korean government stresses the importance of climate change adaptation, farmers in Inje County perceive climate change, but do not consider it the most important driver in their farming decisions. The government tries to establish international renown for their climate change policy by promoting the adaptation concept as the strategy against climate change. However, this strategy is in contrast to the livelihood and needs of farmers.

References:

- Pelling, M. (2011): Adaptation to climate change: From resilience to transformation. Routledge Chapman & Hall, London, New York
- Robbins, P. (2004): Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction. Blackwell Pub., Malden