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RESOURCE

Insurance, Prevention or Just Wait and See? Public Preferences for Water Management Strategies in the Context of Climate Change

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Description / Abstract

Policies in the context of global change involve a high degree of uncertainty, as knowledge about future changes and the effectiveness of potential measures is insufficient. Our study set out to investigate how members of the public evaluate policy options that aim at adaptation to climate change, and more specifically, to reduce the risk from flooding and low flows. We explored how hierarchically structured networks of values and beliefs shape public preferences and attitudes towards two different policies, insurance and a sustainable flood management scheme. In particular, we assessed the role of governance-related values such as efficiency, solidarity and sustainability that allow individuals to evaluate a policy option even if its outcomes are highly uncertain. To this end, we conducted a survey among members of the Scottish public (n = 1033). Findings from spike models and structural equation modelling suggested that there was general support for both policy measures, with a preference for the sustainable flood management approach. In particular, we found perceived severity of change, trust in government, governance-related values and fundamental values to inform attitudes and willingness to pay (WTP) for policy measures. More specific constructs, such as attitudes, were embedded in contexts of more abstract and situation-transcendent values.

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