

Process evaluation of selected WaterCoG pilots

Synthesis

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Interreg
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Acknowledgements

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This evaluation is built on the perceptions and feedback from stakeholders who were involved in the pilot process in The United Kingdom, Sweden, The Netherlands, Denmark and Germany. We would like to thank the research participants for sharing their knowledge and experiences in water governance, and their organisations for enabling their participation.

About this report

This report summarizes the results of the country reports for further synthesis. For details, please consult the country reports (<https://northsearegion.eu/watercog/output-library/>) or contact the project partners directly (<https://northsearegion.eu/watercog/contact/>). Acknowledging the sensitive nature of many insights provided in the evaluation process, we have chosen to anonymize some of the examples provided in the report.

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SUMMARY

Understanding how to successfully implement and integrate European environmental directives is fundamental to delivering sustainable ecosystem-based management strategies for the North Sea Region. The Interreg VB North Sea Region WaterCoG project “Water Co-Governance for Sustainable Ecosystem” focuses on providing evidence for, if and how, co-governance contributes to sustainable water management.

We evaluated the co-governance processes in 11 WaterCoG pilots, bringing together insights on how to improve participatory and co-governance processes. For the distinct contexts in the countries we looked at three common themes:

**The role of knowledge and tools
in co-governance processes**

**The connection of different governance levels
in co-governance processes and the impact of
such processes on water management**

**Process design and implementation
of co-governance processes**

The results have been summarized in country reports for The United Kingdom, Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands and Germany. In a transnational workshop, the partnership identified eight main messages.

The evaluation shows very clearly that WaterCoG partners delivered many valuable approaches to successful water co-governance. Participatory tools have been developed and applied to improve cooperation between organized stakeholders / representatives. For the last two years of the project, WaterCoG will provide special attention to improving citizen involvement, to further broaden societal support for sustainable water management – including better climate change resilience.



The eight main messages.

- {1} Co-governance structure needs a mandate for legitimacy or else it's toothless.
- {2} Citizens need to be more involved in ubiquitous and complex challenges such as climate change adaptation. Citizens need to appreciate their own potential for action.
- {3} Access to knowledge (data, evidence) is perceived by stakeholders as particularly important for co-governance processes.
- {4} Robust knowledge and dialogue platforms are necessary to host partnership-memory.
- {5} Stakeholders engage in longer co-governance processes if they identify benefits for themselves.
- {6} Co-governance is a process which needs a targeted design, and reviews / adaptations at regular intervals.
- {7} Co-governance needs dedicated and impartial hosts.
- {8} Don't forget to celebrate what you have achieved. Be proud of the work done and give positive feedback to those who were involved.

INTRODUCTION

HOW WE UNDERSTAND CO-GOVERNANCE

In this project, water co-governance describes the cooperation between governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in water provision, agriculture, environmental protection and other areas in water resource management. Approaches in co-governance aim to:



Exchange information

Collect information and build knowledge
for better management of ecosystems,
including monitoring activities

Develop measures

Mobilize resources for new measures
such as volunteers' work
or sponsoring by businesses

Increase the local democracy

THE NSR INTERREG VB PROJECT WATERCOG AIMS TO PROVIDE EVIDENCE FOR IF AND HOW CO-GOVERNANCE CONTRIBUTES TO THE FOLLOWING AIMS:

- Increase the understanding of ecosystem services
- Develop new solutions for achieving management targets for water related ecosystem services (as defined by EU WFD)
- Improve the integration of different EU directives
- Provide additional social, economic and environmental benefits not currently being realised under existing governance frameworks
- Provide a framework for extending the best practice developed in the project to areas outside of the immediate pilot areas.

Evaluation in WaterCoG

WaterCoG evaluates its activities in two parts. First, the project's result indicators aim to quantify how the project improves the ecosystem as well as increases stakeholders' commitment and resources for water management. Second, all partners reflected in more depth on the processes to better learn how to improve their participatory and co-governance processes, and in which context to best benefit from them (further called: process evaluation).

Methodological approach for process evaluation

Following a jointly developed thematic focus (see below "scope of the process evaluation"), an international team of researchers implemented the evaluation together with the WaterCoG partners the evaluation. Due to the available resources, only selected pilots (see Table 1 for overview pilots included) have been studied in detail. WaterCoG partners also chose their specific regional focus to best balance the transnational learning approach and the attention to local

needs. For example, in Sweden the evaluation was expanded to allow for insights regarding a potential upscaling of the evaluated Water Council approach. In the Netherlands, the partners showed strong interest in transnational learning and on how to foster citizen involvement. As a consequence, not all evaluations followed the same methods (see table 1). Further, the partners used the partner meetings to openly reflect and learn from each other. This approach ensured they could benefit the most from transnational learning and exchange within the partnership.

For each country (the United Kingdom, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany) one report was developed. These were discussed with the consortium at the WaterCoG evaluation workshop in June 2019 in Copenhagen to identify national similarities, to learn about new aspects on co-governance, and to capture the essence and main messages learned from this part of the evaluation process.

Which strengths and limitations of co-governance become visible in the different pilots?

What needs to change to make co-governance work better?



Scope of the process evaluation:

Questions on strengths and limitations of governance processes can be answered with a focus on many different aspects. They span from the strategical integration of the European legal framework to the individual or psychological dynamics in stakeholder settings. However, the partners did not aim for a comprehensive academic evaluation. They narrowed the focus to fields that have the potential to supply practical knowledge that could be applied in planning or running co-governance processes in water management. The results also enable recommendations on how to foster the benefits of co-governance in water management on a European level.

At the project meeting in Groningen (September 2018), the partners identified the main topics that should be addressed in the evaluation. Based on these, the researchers identified three themes which were confirmed by the partners as follows:

The role of knowledge and tools in co-governance processes

The connection of different governance levels in co-governance processes and the impact of such processes on water management

Process design and implementation of co-governance processes

In the next chapters, each theme will be introduced briefly. More details on the methodological approaches can be found in the country reports and the outline reports.

Main Messages

In the WaterCoG pilots, the project partners initiated co-governance approaches tailored to their specific challenges. The discussions during the partner meetings showed that all pilots achieved positive results were achieved and that the evaluation process has highlighted many learning points on good governance and on barriers and challenges during the implementation of co-governance approaches.

In the following section, we present eight central messages with examples of co-governance approaches implemented in the project. They reflect the aspects that have been identified at the transnational level as the most important in the initiation of co-governance processes. They address issues identified in the evaluation related to process design, connection of governance levels and the role of tools and knowledge.



**Overview pilots:
Eleven WaterCoG pilots
were evaluated.**

SWEDEN

SCOPE OF PILOT:

Four pilots in three Water Councils: Mölndalsån's, Himleån's and Ätran's Water Council, partly with different working groups to test the potential contribution of Water Councils towards better implementation of WFD related river restoration and agriculture related issues.

EVALUATION APPROACH:

Series of evaluation workshops; participatory and unstructured observation at evaluation workshops, river walks and ordinary meetings; semi structured interviews and unstructured interview with stakeholders

UNITED KINGDOM

SCOPE OF PILOT:

CaBA approach implemented in two pilots: Cam and Ely Ouse (CameEO) catchment and Wharfe and Lower Ouse catchment.

EVALUATION APPROACH:

Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders

DENMARK

SCOPE OF PILOT:

Helhedsplan for Ryå - holistic plan for Ryå (Ryå project): WaterCoG pilot to start the development of a holistic plan to the many opportunities and challenges that exist in the Ryå catchment to work towards facilitating multiple ecosystem services (e.g. flood protection) and stakeholder participation.

Combination of regional working groups and local working groups with organized stakeholders.

EVALUATION APPROACH:

Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders

NETHERLANDS

SCOPE OF PILOT:

Texel Pilot: set up a cooperation process with farmers to deal with salinity in irrigated areas.

Oude Diep: evaluating the need for more co-governance approaches.

Climate Resilient Cities & Climate Atlas: providing a knowledge platform for fostering climate change.

EVALUATION APPROACH:

Evaluation workshop with pilot owners

GERMANY

SCOPE OF PILOT:

Round Table Grossenkneten: Open stakeholder meetings in two parallel working groups with different thematic focus.

The pilot tested the Round table as an innovative cooperation with local stakeholders to more easily reach an agreement on groundwater management.

EVALUATION APPROACH:

Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders; evaluation workshop and participatory observation of meetings

I. The connection of governance levels in co-governance processes and their impact on water management.

MESSAGES {1} AND {2}



In WaterCoG we assume that the successful implementation of EU directives (at the top-level) needs a good connection and alignment to the ambitions with local stakeholders (at the bottom-level) who live and operate directly “within” the ecosystem.

Transnational discussions at the start of the WaterCoG project emphasized that this connection is often fragile and that the partners expected co-governance approaches implemented in the project to support and strengthen the connection between top-down and bottom-up ambition. This was a key aspect of the evaluation process. For embedding co-governance into the wider water governance context two messages are especially important: (1) co-governance processes need a mandate and (2) citizens need to be more involved.

MESSAGE ONE

{1}

**Co-governance
structure needs
a mandate for
legitimacy or else
it's toothless.**

When starting a new co-governance process e.g. a working group or a Round Table, it is most important that all involved stakeholders and their organizations actively agree on the scope and/or mandate and how this links to existing decision making processes (e.g. a Water Council in the municipality). It facilitates further support in the area, strengthens the process outcomes and often helps to ensure basic funding. The lack of a jointly defined scope increases the risk that stakeholders feel confused and dis-engage with the process. The evaluation process identified that although such an agreement or mandate does not need to refer to a formalized procedure for implementing measures and/or making decisions in water management, it still represents a key component of a successful co-governance framework.

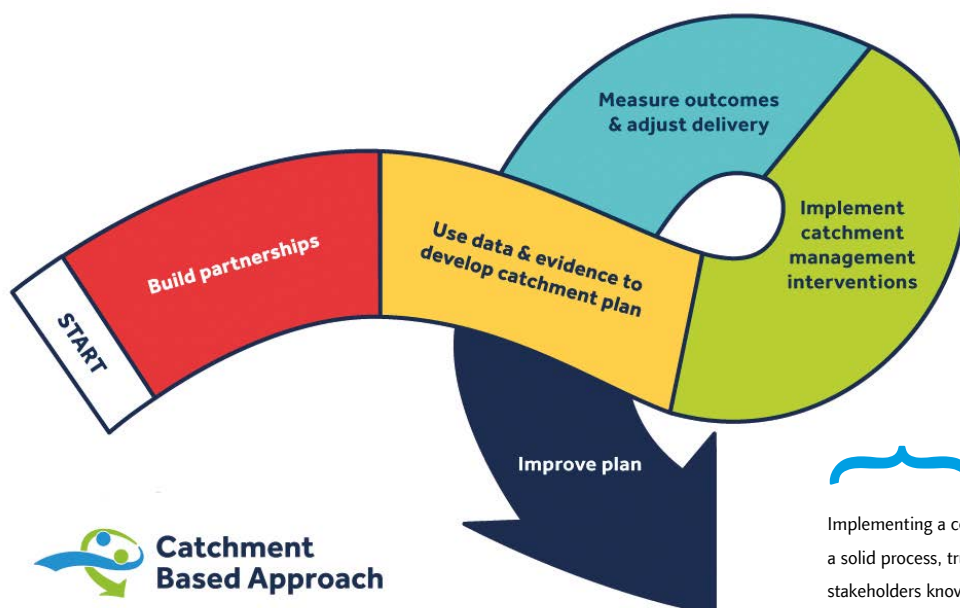
Co-governance in today's water management: complementing established structures with voluntary formats

Involving stakeholders does not automatically lead to connected governance. Co-governance structures need a clear mandate which reflects both the tasks of the group and the legitimization, i.e. the support for this task beyond the involved parties. The evaluated processes show that this is central for a co-governance structure to achieve relevant and material outcomes.

Governance structures in European water management are legitimized by democratic elections and legal backgrounds. Some stakeholders have adapted to these structures very well, and know how to contribute to the decision making processes. Within this established system, cooperative approaches such as Round Tables, Water Councils or catchment partnerships are additional tools. They can stabilize the connection between the local and the top level, i.e. the

national or regional level by providing the legal frame and higher policy objectives. For example the Swedish evaluation showed that there is a need for neutral forums for vertical and horizontal meetings when handling complex issues such as water management. The Swedish Water Councils are filling the function mainly horizontally at a local level, but sometimes also vertically when the County administrative board sends a representative.

A mandate ensures stakeholders that a process is valid and relevant, and they can dedicate more resources to it. For example, in the Danish Ryå project, having politicians and higher level authorities involved gave the water managers more room for facilitation since the head of the municipalities and politicians had beforehand legitimized the process. This was confirmed e.g by a Danish interview partner: "(...) when the politicians and the chairman and vice-chairman in the municipality have nodded to the strategy, I sleep quietly at night, because I know what I'm doing is legitimate."



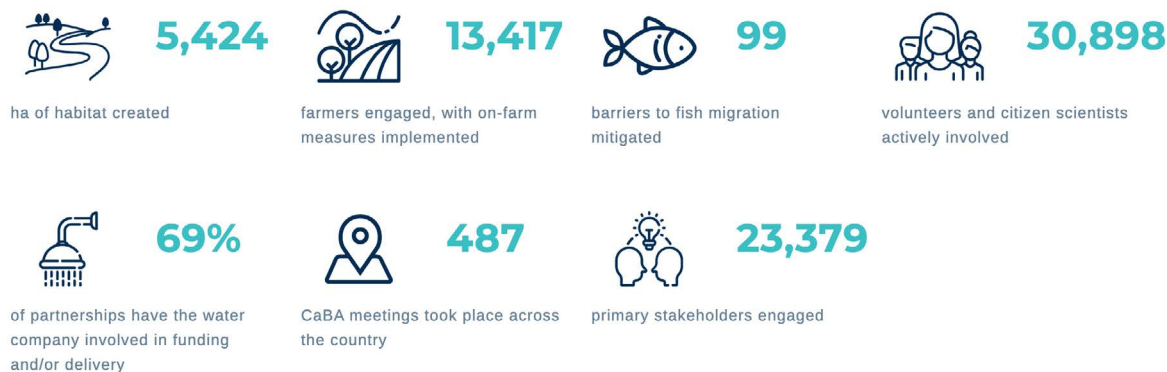
Implementing a co-governance approach does need a solid process, trusted data- and a mandate so that stakeholders know how their input matters in the formal decision making process. Picture: The Rivers Trust.

Formalized Mandate: Easier access to resources and more continuity

The evaluation showed that co-governance structures without a mandate are more likely to lack resources. In many cases, one strong stakeholder took responsibility and invested heavily in maintaining the structure. However, getting support from other stakeholders proved more difficult. If there is a need for measures and actions in the area (e.g. the river catchment), a mandate may help representatives to mobilize resources in their organizations or allows applying for public funds. For example, in the UK “in most cases, funding cannot be granted directly to the catchment partnerships because they have no formal status; and thus, it is granted to the lead organisation for a specific project, which is perceived by those involved to result in a power-over rather than power-sharing situation. As such, one of the catchment partnerships has registered as a charitable incorporated organisation (CIO) solely to obtain access to funding” (UK Country Report). The positive benefits of a clear mandate can be found in the CaBA approach in England (achievements see figure below). Within WaterCoG, the approach was also tested for transfer to Denmark and Sweden.

Achievement of Catchment Based Approach in UK. CaBA Benefits Assessment Working Group January 2020 as displayed at <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/about/> (Access: November, 24th 2020)

Our achievements for 2018/19



No mandate - but at least a clear objective and explicit regional support

A common understanding of the mandate reconciles expectations with what can be achieved in the co-governance process, and helps to clarify the roles of each stakeholder.

The evaluation shows that it is necessary to ensure that a mandate is supported by all stakeholders, and that, if necessary, it is adapted to upcoming objectives or changes. The need for actively discussing and agreeing on the purpose and the expected outcome is often underestimated. If the objective is only once presented by the process manager with no explicit agreement, the risk is high that disagreement or the need for adaptation remains hidden. For example, in one of the pilots, the official objective was to find solutions and create a shared understanding of the pressures on the water system. However, this process took place in the context of a highly escalated conflict, and over the two-year-long process some of the stakeholders shifted the objective to finding reasons to stop the current water management approach. There was no explicit acknowledgement of or agreement to this new objective by the rest of the group. Most of the stakeholders were still interested in finding new solutions for dealing with the pressures. However, the new implicit objective reduced the space for discussion and finally led to the termination of the process. In a different pilot, the lack of a clear mandate was linked to a lack of integration: it was not clear who was responsible for bringing together different results, or for feeding them back to stakeholder groups. This situation resulted in confusion among the stakeholders since the responsibilities were not clearly divided.

{2}

MESSAGE TWO

Citizens need to be more involved in ubiquitous and complex challenges such as climate change adaptation. The citizens need to appreciate their own potential for action.

Area wide issues such as urban climate change adaptation or diffuse pollution can only be solved if many individual stakeholders engage and take action. For example, in the Netherlands, the majority of the land is in private hands. House owners and farmers as typical land owners need to be aware of their options. Providing good practice examples and raising awareness is central.

Involving organized stakeholders is prerequisite before involving citizens

While the environmental administration is in general perceived by local stakeholders as competent to solve problems with their own resources, new challenges such as climate change adaptation need wider public support. In the Dutch pilots, it became clear that much more effort than originally expected was needed to inform citizens of climate change impact and adaptation options. Testing and usage of citizen science tools created additional awareness on the Dutch Oude Diep. For example, children learned about water quality using underwater drones.

Citizens need appealing sustainability products in order to take over responsibility for the implementation of measures. This includes easy ways to protect their homes from extreme stormwater events or improving the local climate with increasing plants and trees in their gardens (instead of sealing the surface). However, in some cases, a well-connected governance system involving organized stakeholder may reduce the need for the general public to engage. This was the case e.g. in the Dutch pilot on resilient cities (see below).



“Sponsored watercourse” involves taking responsibility for and exploring “your own” watercourse. This can be done as a landowner, in a water group or by a school. Exploring, visiting the water course at various times of year and learning more about the things you find will make it more interesting. In the Swedish pilots, a multitude of different tools were applied in the participatory processes. An overview in Swedish can be found here: <https://www.havochvatten.se/verktygvatten>.
Picture: Peter Nolbrant

Increasing public aspiration

(Local) stakeholders such as local politicians and administration need connection to measures. The Dutch pilot on climate resilient cities showed that they better supported events and communication activities that created the feeling that “their street” or “their land” was affected and could be improved. Their support in turn facilitated the involvement of citizens. However, with the number of citizens / farmers involved rising, communication needs to be professionalized and follow a systematic approach. In one evaluated pilot, the farmer was not directly benefiting from the interventions at all – but the local people downstream were. He had a hard time trying to convince other farmers to take action when there was no direct benefit for them. A communication plan supported by all stakeholders may be useful in such cases.

Stakeholders on fieldtrip, a good platform for exchanging different views - depending on interests.
Left picture: Arjen Grent, HHNK. Right picture: Rasmus Bonderup Pedersen, Limfjordssekretariat



II. The role of knowledge and tools in co-governance processes.

MESSAGES {3} AND {4}



Knowledge development in complex ecosystem management plays a central role in achieving good water co-governance: An imbalance among stakeholders and their knowledge (e.g. spatial planning experts have different knowledge than water managers, established angling association or local farmers) can quickly arise. Furthermore, it seems that in the actual decision making process, fact based information is not always the main reason for a specific outcome. Knowledge is more relevant to the final decision when it is interactively discussed, experienced in practice and developed in a collaborative way. The results indicate the need to access data (Message 3), to develop the ability to use and trust it and for robust knowledge and dialogue platforms as an integral part of the process (Message 4).

MESSAGE THREE

{3}

**Access to data,
evidence and
understanding
both is perceived
by stakeholders as
particularly important
for co-governance
processes.**

Stakeholders acknowledge that water ecosystems are complex and that managing them requires much technical knowledge. Getting access to knowledge and a better understanding of the ecosystem is a strong driver for many stakeholders to engage in the first place. For example, in the Round Table in Germany, in an almost two-year process much information was provided and explained in order to better understand the groundwater system. The opportunity was greatly appreciated by the stakeholders, and was the strongest driver to remain involved in the process. In other co-governance processes additional participatory tools helped to develop a shared understanding.

Co-Governance can help bridge the stakeholders' diversity in knowledge and expertise in order to build trust

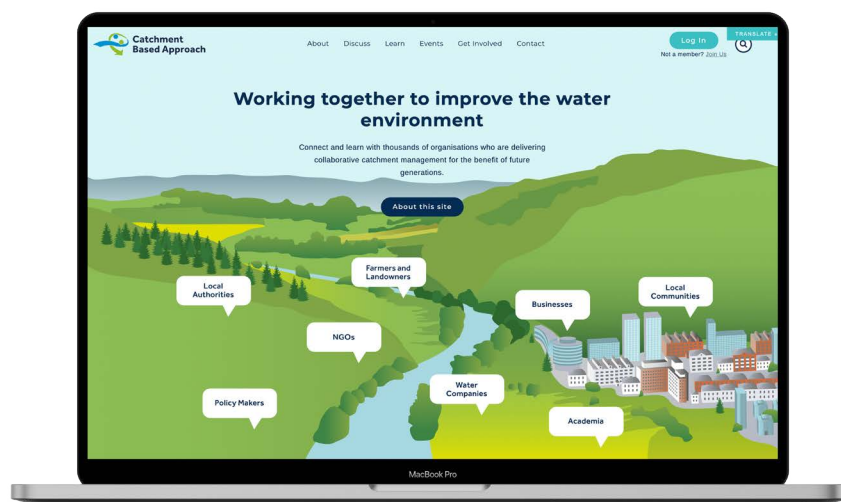
Knowledge and understanding often includes the ability to change perspective, and learn about other perspectives to get a broader and more holistic understanding for the water basin and for each other's view – which does not necessarily mean agreement on these views.

Stakeholders from different sectors and backgrounds bring a high degree of variability in knowledge and the ability to understand technical information and results of co-governance processes. Given the complex and diverse character of most water issues, scientific knowledge production such as numerical modelling approaches or the mapping of morphological structures are accepted tools for generating the necessary knowledge base for finding suitable measures. The complexity

of the tools themselves often requires experts to join in co-governance structures. They explain e.g. the modelling tools and their outcome. However, the evidence from the United Kingdom and Sweden suggest that better outcomes are achieved when 'experts' and other stakeholders work more directly together, rather than knowledge being transferred from the experts to laypeople. For example, asking 'what do we know about this situation...?' leads to more support compared to telling them 'what we know about this situation'. It is a small but important difference that can have a significant impact on the process outcome.

In the Texel pilot, farmers cooperate to implement new solutions for dealing with salinization: Here, a barrier (see foreground) keeps the surfacing fresh water available, and discharges salt water through a small opening below the water surface. In background you see the actual weir. In between both constructions is only salt water. Picture: Arjen Grent





Landing page of <https://data.catchmentbasedapproach.org> developed in the UK by the WaterCoG project to improve data access: "Make data-driven decisions. Discover and explore dozens of datasets and applications that are helping organisations to deliver integrated catchment management for the benefit of future generations".

How can we improve the knowledge base? Can we make stakeholders follow our lead? Do they trust us, and follow the process?

Accessing knowledge has two dimensions: technical access to data and evidence, and understanding of information / data / facts accessed / perspectives. In many of the evaluated processes much attention was given to how the transfer of knowledge from experts to other stakeholders works. This was particularly important and challenging in cases of contested or contradictory knowledge. In one of the evaluated pilots, all data was assumed wrong or incomplete by some of the stakeholders if it pointed towards an objected water management option, despite many efforts to improve the knowledge base of the local non-water experts. For these stakeholders, providing access to more information was not sufficient to de-escalate the conflict. The Swedish pilots avoided one-way-information meetings with advanced, technical / biological explanations or kept them short and enriched with good illustrations. Experts were joining in an integrated way. Here, the stakeholders better appreciated new knowledge. Some described a changed view on water, and changed reaction to and understanding of the processes (see below). The Dutch experience confirmed that information provision alone only contributes to building trust if non-conflictual information is provided. Otherwise, it's most central to combine the provision of information with active dialogue formats.

Participatory tools & local data as a way to make knowledge relevant to and inclusive for all stakeholders

In the Water CoG evaluated processes, providing access to knowledge formed the basis for building trust and establishing credibility. WaterCoG partners tested many tools for managing and providing information (see examples in boxes throughout the report). The Swedish pilots created a dialogue by investing a lot of time in river walks and very small group dialogues so that each participant could develop an understanding of the issues and provide their input. These processes were in general highly valued and appreciated by all stakeholders. As one landowner in the Swedish pilot said: "Water is much more than just water, with all life living in it. I have got another perspective on it, now it is not just about canals which drain our fields, but it is something else as well – fish and birds." The evaluation also showed that tools enabling diverse individual contributions reveal stakeholder input that in other settings went unheard. In addition, stakeholders who were prominent in the dialogues also commented that they didn't need the small group / dialogue methods. This means that at least some actors were not aware or did not find it relevant that others were excluded without those participatory methods. That highlights the possibilities of using dialogue tools geared towards individual presentation in order to reach a broader knowledge base. Stakeholders are keen to have their knowledge and

observations acknowledged and responded to. If there is a (potential) conflict of interests, the integration of data generated by local stakeholders that reflects their observations can create trust. In the Ryå projects process, the type of knowledge that came from the local working groups was practical knowledge showing opportunities: "At local level, there were some wishes I did not know of before I had asked. For example there have been some wishes about having some boat sites at Ryå where the representative from the rural council actually said: 'The municipality owns that area why don't we use that area for something recreational.'" In the Texel pilot, farmers were very positive about uploading their own monitoring data to better understand the salinity problem on their fields and see the impact of a saltwater weir. This project led to new awareness on management options, and support for the governmental water management approach. In another, highly escalated project, local stakeholders felt that their observations were not acknowledged and considered sufficiently. In this case the situation was especially difficult because the distribution of expertise was very imbalanced between the conflicting parties. No solution was found within the co-governance approach. The repeated claim of some stakeholders that their knowledge was not appropriately considered in the modelling approaches points to the important role of included knowledge in building trust.

Access to knowledge therefore not only affects the content, but also the process of co-governance. There are three reasons for this: a) since expert knowledge plays a central role in current water management, bridging the difference in expertise between stakeholders is necessary before local knowledge can make an important contribution. However, it often takes

a lot of time; b) co-governance is less about controlling and understanding scientific expertise but more about building trust; and c) strong stakeholders may dominate co-governance more easily if they follow traditional formats. Communicating knowledge thus is not an end itself but needs a purpose: what kind of knowledge is necessary to foster solutions? On which aspects do the stakeholders need to develop a shared understanding? Will scientific knowledge be the only basis for decision making or are there other factors? Experience from the pilots shows that a single presentation may not be sufficient and that important facts need to be communicated in more than one way for stakeholders to better connect them to their knowledge base.

Participatory tools may help to raise awareness in cases where stakeholders are not sufficiently aware of the need to act, and their potential to contribute to e.g. a better resilience towards climate change or a healthier ecosystem in their region. For example, in the Netherlands, after introducing the need for climate change adaptation in information events, stakeholders increasingly accessed the Climate Atlas.

In summary, this shows that participatory instruments are not a one-off method, but closely linked to the way in which successful co-governance approaches are established.

The climate atlas (<https://hhnk.klimaatatlas.net/>) developed in one of the Dutch pilots provides a successful example. The online portal was developed to provide impact of climate change data. While at first there was no perceived need for such a platform, it is now used by an increasing number of stakeholders, often saving municipalities money and time to develop such a tool themselves.

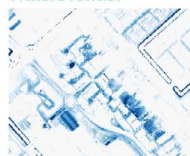


HHNK KLIMAATATLAS

Alles Themakaarten Extra Overzichtkaart

📍 31167 Bockenheim, Duitsland

Wateroverlast



Hitte



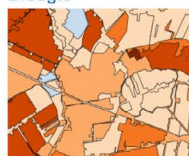
Waterkwaliteit



Bodemdaling



Droogte



Overstromingen



Meekoppelkansen



Gebiedskenmerken



MESSAGE FOUR

{4}

**Robust knowledge
and dialogue platforms
are necessary to host
partnership-memory.**

A lack of continuity in co-governance due to changing representatives is reality. Knowledge platforms can document process information and not only increase process transparency but also make it easier for new representatives to join. But in practice, keeping a partnership's memory updated and accessible is a challenge.

Avoid the risk of process disruption and improve knowledge management

The evaluations showed that a change of representatives caused disruptions in some pilots, mainly because they resulted in a lack of process knowledge on the part of the new representatives. What was agreed on? How was this agreement reached? What were the alternatives? This dis-continuity increases the risks of forgetting objectives, aims or the background of specific decisions and can end with abrupt non communication.

Next to process knowledge questions about content would also benefit from a knowledge and dialogue platform. For example in Sweden local stakeholders miss knowledge about how water issues are organized. Also, they look for a more a systemic understanding and holistic knowledge about the water basin relating to nature, biology, hydro morphology etc, but also of history (how did the landscape develop, what and where are the effects, political visions), differences in perspectives, different networks (local, but also regional and national) and the group process. Those issues are complex and difficult to grasp and to be a part of.

Online knowledge platforms can help here if they are accepted and used by all participants. As an additional benefit, knowledge platforms such as the Climate Atlas (see box) can host more data and evidence on preferred measures, including monitoring data by citizens. This way, knowledge platforms can contribute to a better connection of different governance levels.

Better credibility that justifies measures helps to create a better local basis. Coordinated recipient control (water sampling) often takes place with the involvement of municipalities and larger companies within the river basin. Sometimes, sampling needs to be more adapted to local conditions, e.g. in order to see where most erosion and nutrient supply is taking place within the area. Picture: Peter Nolbrant



III. Process design and implementation of co-governance processes.

MESSAGES {5} to {8}



One aim of the process evaluation is to learn from the WaterCoG pilots about the strengths and weaknesses in the set up and facilitation of their co-governance processes. How well have the processes managed to involve stakeholders? What role has the facilitator taken?

MESSAGE FIVE

{5}

**Stakeholders engage in
longer co-governance
processes if they identify
benefits for themselves.**

In the process evaluation, all stakeholders engaged valued co-governance from the perspective of the outcome: They appreciated the opportunity to get involved. That was also the case if the processes had not (yet) led to specific results. However, additional benefits gain importance as the number of cooperation processes increases. Since they often add to the existing daily workload, stakeholders carefully weigh (potential) benefits of engaging or not engaging in a specific co-governance process.

Different benefits for different stakeholders: It's not all about money

With several cooperation processes to attend, representatives easily drop out once a specific process does not lead to additional benefits. Benefits for stakeholders are not necessarily linked to monetary output. Some WaterCoG partners felt that a strong focus on monetary rewards and compensation is sometimes not beneficial to the processes. A key finding from Sweden is that there is a significant benefit in building on stakeholders' commitment instead of formal or financial rewards. Specific measures, informing local politicians or activities that make the local society aware of water problems can be much more successful. The commitment among stakeholders can provide access to other networks, which can raise the local awareness of water issues. Another part which has been valued in the Swedish context is the possibility to have a direct and non-official dialogue with authorities and decision makers.

The implementation of measures also provides a major motivation for the initiation of co-governance processes. A central aspect here is involving local stakeholders who have access to land. From the stakeholders' perspective, the costs of providing land must be lower than benefits created in the co-governance process. Such benefits can be more easily controlled via the design or location of a measure, or they can consist of a better outcome of a compensation agreement. Other benefits include the opportunity to protect their environment; to ensure balancing of all interests; to contribute to sustainable water management; or to gain a contract for implementing the measure.

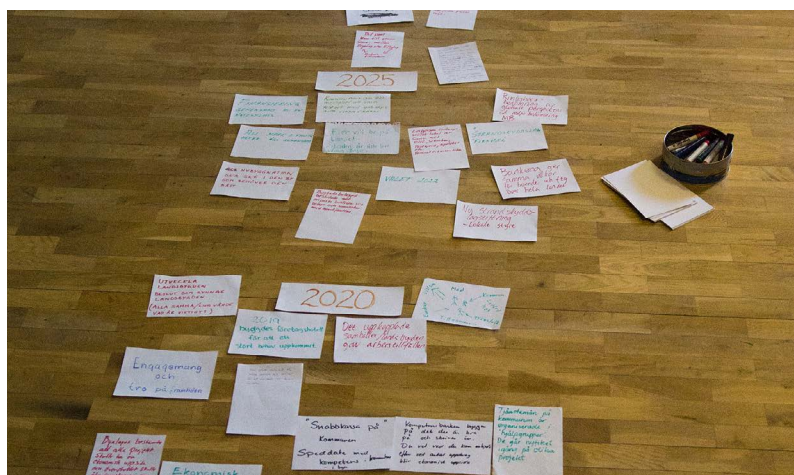


Identification of benefits is closely linked to the issues addressed in the participatory process. As the first of its kind, the OOWV initiated a Round Table to discuss the local water situation in Großenkneten. At the kick-off, the participants worked in small groups to collect issues. Picture: OOWV

MESSAGE SIX

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Co-Governance is a process which needs a targeted design, and reviews / adaptations at regular intervals.



Evidence from the pilot processes suggests that the starting point for a co-governance process design needs to be the current interest which can be e.g. to develop a problem definition or a long-term strategic approach. How the process is set up requires decisions on mandate, agenda, decision processes as well as tools enabling a discussion and dialogue process which contributes to a shared understanding of the issues at hand. A stakeholder analysis is necessary to make sure all relevant stakeholders are included (or invited). Whether it is called a Round Table, a Water Council, a working group or a partnership may not be as relevant as that all decisions on process design are supported by the participating stakeholders.

From this perspective, a co-governance process needs to be developed jointly with the stakeholders. Its design has to include the formats which fit the need for dialogue, sharing different stakeholder perspectives, developing measures solving conflicts or other objectives of the process. For example, in the Swedish pilots, brainstorming and card



Future history: A playful way to create a story from today's date up to the envisioned future. It provides a collective experience that people can remember. It is also a way of finding crucial events that are needed in order to achieve the vision. Picture: Peter Nolbrant

sorting methods were chosen to enable all stakeholders to "have their say" and listen to each other. Tools such as the Swedish "fika" (coffee and cake) or river walks enabled small dialogue groups and exchanges between stakeholders, and brought different knowledge together. In the German pilot, the stakeholders' call for information was comprehensively responded to by providing presentations on the groundwater management aiming to increase the general understanding on the groundwater systems. It was strongly appreciated by stakeholders and perceived as a sign of increased transparency.

As already pointed out in Message 4, it is not just these tools which are important, but also compiling summaries of meetings and activities shortly afterwards. For participants who are not experts on the topic of the meeting, illustrations (pictures) can facilitate understanding.



The stakeholders at the Round Table Großenkneten also went to excursions to get a better understanding of the local situation. Picture: OOWV

Joint design and clear leadership

With changing circumstances (regulations, funding, attending individuals, issues addressed...) co-governance structures may need to change their objectives and scope. It is important that such changes are hosted and actively managed, e.g. by inviting new stakeholders for new issues. This situation requires not only good process design but also clear leadership and facilitation. In this sense, co-governance needs to combine two aspects. One is to focus on tangible outcomes such as the implementation of a river restoration measure, because outcomes are what gets most attention by stakeholders. The second aspect is to ensure that you keep doing co-governance. In some of the evaluated processes initiated by responsible authorities or strong single non-governmental stakeholders, the participating stakeholders expected the initiator to take the lead and provide financial resources. This way the joint commitment to success becomes less relevant. In the Dutch pilots, one success factor for good co-governance was “no freeriders”. From their experience, all attending people need to engage. They designed the Texel pilot process to prevent situations like in earlier processes where participants tended to lay back and listen only. The design of the process allowed for interaction in a larger groups, e.g. by breaking up the larger group into small-group sessions on vulnerable spots in an area or joint development of small-scale measures.

Pilots in different countries showed that once the process was successfully running for some time, stakeholders either drop out or become passive. In addition, changing projects and /or a changing stakeholder landscape may require e.g. a new stakeholder analysis or an ongoing process that enables new stakeholders to join. This way all stakes or other valuable actors are included as early as possible.

An approach that includes regular reviews and reflection on itself therefore allows increasing the current benefit of the involved stakeholders by enabling adjustments to changing circumstances. Co-governance designs which include group meetings of 10-30 people may also host a larger meeting inviting a broader range of stakeholder to present results and discuss the general aim of the process. The target group and number of stakeholders can be adapted to the issues and (interim) aims of the process.



Knowledge-sharing is important when meeting with stakeholders, but traditional meetings can become tools of one-way communication and hinder real involvement. Picture: Rasmus Bonderup Pedersen, Limfjordssekretariat.

Conflicts may need special formats

If stakeholders already identified a shared interest to learn about the catchment, the pilots showed that a constructive cooperation can be established. However, if stakeholders distrust and question each other's knowledge from the start, and their knowledge exchange mainly intends to prove the other stakeholders wrong, this points towards a conflict which needs special efforts to create dialogue. A non-committal dialogue process may not be sufficient here. In one of the pilots, a highly escalated conflict between a few stakeholders hindered the co-governance process in many ways. Eventually, the conflict was relocated because one stakeholder started a formal request to the responsible water authority parallel to the governance process. As a result, the co-governance process threatened to impede a formal planning process and had to be stopped by the initiator.

Co-governance processes needs time

Careful consideration needs to be given to when a co-governance process should be initiated and implemented. As a tool, co-governance requires considerable engagement and resources from the initiator(s) and all other stakeholders. Representatives need to bring results from the process back to their organisations and confirm actions. This is even more important when different departments from the same stakeholder need to be included. For example, the village administration often needs to involve planning, agriculture, environmental protection and water management. In practice however, co-governance processes are often financed within the frame of projects which have got a limited duration. In one of the pilots, the stakeholders criticized that the development of a holistic plan for the catchment could be started within WaterCoG but it was unclear how the process would continue after the project. It is important that the entire process is independently supported for the expected duration. If the timeframe is anticipated to be too short, interim steps should be defined so that a result can be achieved by the stakeholders. The process can be taken up again later.

Visiting landowners in their own home is essential to foster the best dialogue.

Picture: Carsten Rømming Sørensen, Limfjordssekretariat



MESSAGE SEVEN

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**Co-Governance
needs dedicated and
impartial hosts.**

Revisit the process and adapt the objectives and means if necessary: This ensures benefits for stakeholders, but also requires their input. A tool, "Follow-up and improvement", was successfully tested in the Swedish pilot. It includes a targeted interaction of smaller groups as well as a plenary discussion and is based on the recognition of the need for everybody's feedback. Picture: Peter Nolbrant.



Process leadership needs to be well-connected to the process itself. This means that hosts need to actively engage in the process, e.g. by providing technical input or by actively supporting the process aims. In one of the pilots, the commitment to special issues by some shareholders has hindered meetings and fostered non-transparent communication. This was due to activities which weren't anchored in the group and thus stopped the co-governance process.



Co-Governance needs proficient facilitation and good preparation of meetings

The process evaluation showed that competent facilitation is a key factor for the success of a process. The facilitation needs to support the visibility of all interests and needs in the discussion. While the aim should be clear, in many cases the specific objectives are emerging as the process plays out. They cannot be predefined because of the complexity and diversity of the interests in water management, which requires sound preparation, and a detailed planning of individual events.

Processes can be facilitated in very different ways. WaterCoG partners emphasized that most successful facilitators are trained and experienced with participatory tools to develop knowledge and an understanding on the respective water management issue. At the same time, a too strong technical background may impede the openness of the facilitator towards non-technical aspects in the discussion, such as the perceived threat by stakeholders. However, this does not necessarily mean that an external consultant has to be hired as facilitator.

Hosts as facilitators

In many of the evaluated processes, the hosts successfully chaired and moderated the meetings. In these cases, the facilitator needs to be very transparent about their different roles. In some of the evaluated meetings the participants felt that the stakeholder facilitating the meeting was lacking impartiality. For example, in one country the focus of the processes (co-hosted by two stakeholders) was perceived by other stakeholders to be increasingly only on environmental protection and lacking integration of other interests. This may not have happened on purpose but simply because the host often is the most active participant. It can be difficult to take a step back from one's own interest if other stakeholders do not step in and make sure that their interests are represented.

A positive example was reported from a Danish pilot where a local politician who was also a landowner facilitated the working group. He marked his contributions to the discussion always in relation to his different roles by saying e.g. "I am now talking as a landowner...". This was seen as a positive way of dealing with the dual role.

Hosts as process managers

In addition to the formal hosts, and the process facilitator, the need for a process manager or coordinator was identified. In one of the Swedish pilots, a knowledgeable co-ordinator dealt with things such as applying for grants, calling for meetings, making a summary of meetings, leading the co-governance processes to get the interests involved. This was highly appreciated by the stakeholders.

MESSAGE EIGHT

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**Don't forget to
celebrate what you
have achieved. Be
proud of the work
done and give positive
feedback to those
who were involved.**

Co-governance takes time, needs personal dedication, and opens a new way to water management which brings – like all innovations – uncertainty in process development and possible results. As a Danish interview partner put it: “You have to acknowledge that it is not just a meeting with 8 participants instead of 4 participants, but acknowledge that it is of course more time-consuming [...], it is not just double as many people it is double complexity.” But it is not only double complexity – it is also a way get a more holistic knowledge and a wider network.

It is easy to forget the positive aspects of co-governance: creating a forum for joint discussion on water management is in most cases an accomplishment in itself. Engaging with other stakeholders can be a game changer because conflicts are no longer hidden. Local stakeholders see and take the opportunity to contribute to sustainable water management.

It is important to acknowledge all efforts and achievements, both within the meetings and also in public; it motivates not only stakeholders engaging partly in their leisure time but also hosts and the public to support this process. For example, when one working group closed their work in the German Round Table, stakeholders insisted on a larger meeting which invited more stakeholders to acknowledge the agreement on relevant issues.

Picture: The Rivers Trust



CONCLUSION

The WaterCoG project has invested many resources to promote sustainable water management with local co-governance approaches. The examples from the pilots illustrated what successful co-governance needs. The process evaluation shows that there is no short cut to building trust and working partnerships. It needs time. The presented central messages spelled out very clearly why co-governance is not trivial: The need to develop a shared understanding on complex ecosystem and water management issues requires access to data and knowledge, a shared process memory (knowledge and dialogue platform) as well as stakeholder understanding. Participatory tools such as river walks, dialogue instead of discussions, interactive maps or shared online platforms have been useful for building trust and knowledge based on commitment instead of classical information provision e.g. by presentation of modelling results. Still, whether stakeholders need to understand presented facts, or to be sure that their own data is integrated in the knowledge base, depends on the local situation: How much trust needs to be built? How much support by stakeholders e.g. in providing land or other resources is necessary? Some of the pilots implementing a strong bottom-up process in a conversational environment produced good results. Competent process design and facilitation must take into account the interests of all stakeholders. This requires a process design and goals that are flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances (e.g. new regulations or funding opportunities). Only then do relevant stakeholders identify sufficient benefits to engage in the process. Finally yet importantly, a strong and effective co-governance approach is nested in existing governance

structures and connects to the relevant decision making bodies / processes. The WaterCoG partners emphasized that a clear objective and official legitimization is a minimum requirement for the results of the co-governance structure to become relevant in the decision making structure: Co-governance needs the support of all engaged stakeholders. The explicit agreement on process objectives, formats and expected outcomes make the process more efficient. A formalized mandate indicating the support not only of the people sitting in the meetings but also their organizations helps in addition with the allocation of resources, the application for funds and the trust of the stakeholders involved.

WaterCoG pilots have shown much expertise in setting up co-governance processes with representatives of stakeholder groups. A major challenge still remains: How can co-governance support citizens to better contribute to sustainable water management and a climate resilient society? Current challenges such as climate change adaptation and mitigation with necessary transformations in cross cutting areas such as mobility or energy production will need a broad effort from society. What do citizens need to not only identify benefits in participatory processes but to be motivated to implement measures which improve their own resilience? In the extension of the WaterCoG project, partners have set new pilots to address these questions.

The transnational WaterCoG project team.

Picture: The Rivers Trust



