

Part 2 of WaterCoG Evaluation: reflection on pilot processes in The Netherlands

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Version of 16th June 2019

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Acknowledgements:

The work presented in this report was developed under the Water Co-Governance for Sustainable Ecosystems (WaterCoG) project and funded by Interreg VB North Sea Region Programme 2014–2020. The three-year project brings together nine partners from Sweden, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and UK in a consortium led by The Rivers Trust. For further information on the WaterCoG project, please visit <https://northsearegion.eu/watercog/>.

We would like to thank the research participants for sharing their knowledge and experiences in water governance, and their organisations for enabling their participation.



Background of Document

The NSR Interreg VB project WaterCoG wants to provide evidence if and how the co-governance, and in particular as implemented in our pilots, contribute to the aims we defined in the proposal:

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

For this, WaterCoG evaluates its activities in two parts. First, the project's result indicators aim to quantify how the pilots impact on improving the ecosystem status, the stakeholders' commitment and on increasing the available resources for water management. Second, all partners would like to reflect in more depth on the processes to better learn on how to improve their participatory and co-governance processes, and in which context to best benefit from them. As the coordinator of WP6 (Evidence and Evaluation), the OOWV has contracted Interessen Im Fluss to coordinate and implement this reflection, including local support as required, and a synthesis of the results. Together with the partners, part 2 of the evaluation will be developed, and implemented in country wise processes, adapted to the needs of the local partners.

The overall guiding questions of the evaluation are **“What needs to change to make co-governance better work?”** or **“What are the strengths and limitations to co-governance, shown in the different pilots?”**

In this document, the results of evaluation in The Netherlands are presented.

The current version has remained unchanged since June 2019 when it was sent out as a draft and accepted with not further comments.



Data and methods

The evaluation has been based on a concept developed by the WaterCoG partners as well as the local researchers. The concept allows for comparing the processes in the different countries, and to identify drivers in particular for their pilots on how to improve the water co-governance.

The evaluation process in the different countries was adapted to the needs and interests of the different WaterCoG partners so that the local researchers had the option to combine interviews, workshops, and information provided by WaterCoG partners¹.

Since the Dutch WaterCoG partners already had internal evaluation as part of the pilot process, this evaluation process focused on bringing together earlier evaluation results, and reshaping them to the research questions. The results of this evaluation are based on two meetings. The first meeting took place at HHNK with one representative from the municipalities, and the project managers of the pilot processes. In the second meeting with the Dutch WaterCoG partners, results on earlier evaluation of the Oude Diep pilot was presented and discussed together with the results of feedback on the pilots "Climate Atlas" and "Texel".

Short Description of the Dutch pilots

Three pilots have been set up as part of the WaterCoG project:

- Climate Resilience Cities aiming at establishing a multidisciplinary approach towards climate change adaptation in urban areas where climate risk assessment were developed for selected municipalities.
- Texel measures raising awareness on salinity in the drainage system and finding solutions for managing freshwater on Texel
- Oude Diep aiming to increase participation and collaboration across the governance spectrum and introducing new co-governance methods in a local wetland restoration area.

All pilots include very locally adapted activities and differ in terms of scope. However, all focus on members of the general public such as farmers and citizens as individuals, and not as an organized group who are as house- and/or landowners impacted by water management and climate change adaptation.

More information can be found at <https://northsearegion.eu/watercog/pilot-projects/>.

¹ For more information see: "Part 2 of WaterCoG Evaluation: reflection on pilot processes. Outline of process and issues. December 2019."



What needs to change for providing better water co-governance approaches? - Results section

Three themes were identified of central interest to the WaterCoG partnership to answer to this question.

- The role of knowledge and tools in co-governance processes
- The connection of governance levels in co-governance processes
- Process design and implementation

The section presents the insights and lessons learnt.

The role of Knowledge and Tools in co-governance process: How can it be (more) relevant for the decision –making processes?

In the Dutch pilots, knowledge and tools played different roles, but most times were crucial to raise awareness on specific issues. Knowledge was offered by means of presentation or the gathered on an online platform called ClimateAtlaas. Tools involved hands-on tools such as smartphone-based kits for testing salinity in surface water or underwater drones showing water quality under the surface to school kids. Experience showed that being part of easy generation of data which can be directly linked to a specific use / problem, raises interest and motivates participation. For example, the farmers in the Texel pilot were measuring the salinity in the small ditches and gained new insights on the salt- freshwater -layering of the water. This confirmed salinity as a pressure and pointed also to a potential solution.

In the pilot Climate Resilient Cities, presentations on the impact of climate change were used to raise awareness on the need for adaptation, and for introducing adaptation as a cross-cutting issue in all local planning procedures in the municipality.

The increased direct citizen participation was not considered necessary in the flood restoration area in the Oude Diep. As described below (next section), no need for co-governances was identified by the local authorities. However, even though implementation of ecosystem restoration most times is rather easy, there was a perceived need for increasing awareness for all benefits. For example, if a flood restoration plan may not be reasonable for restoring an ecosystem, other benefits such as improving recreational potential or biodiversity might create sufficient benefits to improve implementation. Thus, the pilots Oude Diep also aimed at getting a better systemic understanding of e.g. floodplain restoration measures. For the Hanzehogeschool in Groningen tools provided an entry point for the researchers to the pilot. Testing and using citizen science tools created an additional benefits to the Oude Diep, namely that it facilitated access to water issues for children.. For example, they invited children to test water quality using underwater drones.

- **Lessons Learnt:** In the Dutch pilots, knowledge and provision of new information has contributed to raising awareness particular at the start of a process. For increasing engagement, the direct involvement in data generation, combined with a direct learning impact / consequence for personal action, tools such as salinity probes or water quality testing kits has proven very effective.



- **Recommendation:** Information provision should focus on non-conflicting information. Engaging stakeholders is facilitated if they can contribute to the knowledge basis with data directly linked to the potential options and issues of their interest.

Connected governance levels in co-governance processes: Making the best of top-down governance?

The evaluation activities in the Oude Diep showed that – similar to the other pilots – in The Netherlands the public demand for more co-governance in water management is limited:

- “The Oude Diep is rooted in a program of high priority water governance and has subsequently been heavily and effectively governed in a top-down manner for many years;
- Top and middle stakeholder groups have significant resources at their disposal and can achieve their set goals and objectives, and consequently have little incentive to engage additional stakeholder groups or to develop new co-governance methods;
- Bottom stakeholder groups have high trust in top and middle stakeholder groups and perceive their own responsibilities concerning management and governance to be limited to adherence to law, payment of taxes (which fund area management) and participation in democratic processes that ultimately dictate the actions of area managers”²

Similar in the other pilots the success factor for good participation included that mandate and outcome are formalized and include the signatures of decision makers. For this reasons, the strong horizontal and vertical stakeholder process included as milestone the agreement on a climate manifest, and a final programme including measures to be implemented. So far, both Oude Diep and Climate Resilience Cities focused on organized stakeholders. To strengthen the awareness on the manifold benefits of specific water management measures (e.g. a wetland restoration) both see the need to motivate citizens more to engage with their environment, and to take on responsibility for measures on their own ground.

In addition, the legal requirement that municipalities now have to develop a climate risk assessment, provided a strong push to motivate stakeholder engagement.

- **Lessons Learnt:** In the Dutch pilots, often stakeholders, authorities and citizen alike perceive water management successful, and do not see the need for stronger citizen engagement. In contrast, given that climate change adaptation will impact a property / field level, house owners and individual citizens need to be more motivated.

² quoted from presentation at WaterCoG partner meeting „Pilot Project Update - Het Oude Diep Groningen, June 2019”



Process Design and Implementation – What are the strengths and weaknesses of the process?

For the process design, as mentioned above the pilots Climate Resilience Citites and Texel built on rich experience which identified earlier ten factors for successful regional processes³:

1. Bottom – up approach, start with focusing on land / house owner and their ambitions
2. Real people to engage with: you cannot shake hands with an organization. Networks are also about people, less about organizations.
3. Specify the agenda according to the existing questions.
4. Safe environment: ensure that people feel safe, free and motivated to engage in the discussions.
5. No freeriders: attending persons need all to engage. Often, participants tend to lay back and listen only. The design of the process needs to allow for interaction also in a larger groups, e.g. by including small-group work on vulnerable spots in an area or joint development of small-scale measures.
6. Mandate for engagement: A process needs to start with (developing) an agreement on why it takes place, and who is engaged for what reasons. This agreement needs to be signed by the participants, and, if appropriate but the relevant decision makers of the organizations.
7. Oriented towards results relevant for practical management
8. Agreements need to be consolidated.
9. Link to (existing) political strategies and objectives.
10. Unsuspecting host

Conclusions

The Dutch pilots in WaterCoG were set up building on strong experience in stakeholder involvement- both horizontal and vertical. However, the focus was mostly on organized stakeholders. Thus, the Dutch WaterCoG partners consider the main challenge in motivating local citizens, unorganized groups and individuals to take over more responsibility.

Within the given time frame of the project, activities for strong citizen engagement were only implemented to a limited degree. As shown in the Texel pilots, a direct benefit for the individual has to be visible- either by gathering knowledge on interesting issues or providing impact on challenges already faced in real life (such as salinization symptom). The HHNK considers it the next step to strengthen the link to house owners, and to show small-scale measures or other adaption options.

³ Translated from Karel Bruin-Baerts, „Gebiedsprocessen – De 10 successfactoren.” November 2017.

