

Group 1: Stakeholding, stakeholders and messiness — facilitated by Annemarieke de Bruin

The group came together around a number of governance situations that people suggested on post-it notes. These post-it notes were grouped together as they all had something to do with stakeholders, engagement, and conflict. To get a common understanding of the situation the group would be discussing, we took words from the post-it notes and created a narrative with them:

- *engagement and disengagement — who? who not?, voice, ownership, speaking and hearing, mediums of engagement, scales, trust, too much engagement, empowerment, inclusion/exclusion, and power; and*
- *words related to willingness and motivation — incentives, changing behaviours, action, thinking progress is made, someone is listening.*

These keywords enabled the group to define the situation:

How do we build a fair / equitable / participatory / inclusive and effective engagement process in a complex (multi-stakeholder) community?

The group tried to reflect on this question in relation to the experience at the catchment level of implementing the CaBa approach in the UK, recognising that similar challenges were apparent at EU level in the process of data collection as well as internationally in water governance more broadly. At catchment level, one could identify a great diversity of stakeholders with multiple stakes, interests and power that influenced decision making (the horizontal dimension), as well as ‘rules’ imposed by different administrative levels of governance, e.g. local, national, EU (the vertical dimension). The group also recognised the influence on what happened within a catchment of: 1) other catchments surrounding a catchment; and 2) the interdependency between the issues within a catchment and issues outside that catchment. One example of the latter was the market more broadly influencing agricultural practices within the

catchment.

Those who had been involved in the CaBa implementation process commented that this process is not at all short of engagement with people and different stakeholders. So much consultation is happening that it has resulted in individual — as well as more general — fatigue to participate in continuous and additional meetings about catchment-based planning. The group identified that this situation was particularly due to each catchment programme setting up their own engagement activities. Each catchment programme engaged with stakeholders separately and did not share insights or coordinate these engagement activities with each other. The group concluded that this pillared/siloed approach is not sustainable.

In response to the above, the actions proposed were to break down the barriers between the catchment programmes so that engagement activities could be better coordinated, more effective, simplified and fewer. There is also a need to better understand why people exclude themselves from the process or are excluded from the process. The underlying assumption is that it is

important to have all voices represented within the decision making process, or to clearly understand why some voices choose not to participate.

The group discussed three potential logs in the logjam. The first was that there may be an issue of lack of trust with those who are not engaging with the process. This can be because of distrust between different stakeholder groups or between stakeholder groups and those facilitating the process. It can also be due to people not feeling that their contributions will have any effect on the outcomes. The second log that was identified was the recognition that time is a scarce resource and that people may choose to not participate or are unable to participate, despite wanting to, due to a lack of time. The third log related to the recognition that although the facilitators and designers of the process are keen to involve all voices, some stakeholders will not understand or see the relevance of water governance to their livelihood or interests.

If the process becomes more effective, the hope is that it maintains the engagement of existing participants in the long-term and also re-engages with voices that have not

been involved so far or that have disengaged from the process. The group foresees that such an engagement process will help to build relationships and create a deeper or more inclusive sense of community. It will also help to widen the potential solutions that are being put forward. Some of these solutions will be non-technical and may end up being cheaper than those proposed by the current set of stakeholders engaged in the process.

The group also recognised that one can organise the perfect participatory process but change is normal and success is not guaranteed. People can move out of the area, change jobs, or have changes in their lives that make it impossible to participate any further, etc. A participatory process can never be made static, and is also unlikely to be stable. Those organising and facilitating the process need to be able to adapt and be

flexible in their approaches to engage as wide a range of stakeholders at any one point in time in as much of a fair process as possible. They also need to be cognisant of the flow of power, which may be challenged due to the inclusive process of multiple stakeholders, but it may also revert back to the status quo after the voices have been heard. This may lead to people again distrusting the process and opting out of it, something that should ideally be avoided.

Many other factors influence the motivation of stakeholders to participate in the catchment based approach than those mentioned here, but this discussion provided a suggestion to how the CaBa approach could build a more fair/equitable/participatory/inclusive and effective engagement process in a complex (multi-stakeholder) community.