

#### Group 4: Communication for engagement and action — facilitated by Natalie Foster

The group convened around a set of post-it notes that had been clustered together in relation to language, technologies, frameworks and outcomes. We began our discussion by talking through each of the post-it notes. This process led to a focus for our discussion on communication for engagement and action in relation to improving water governance. It also enabled us to identify which of the post-it notes were within (or beyond) the scope of our discussion (Figure 1).

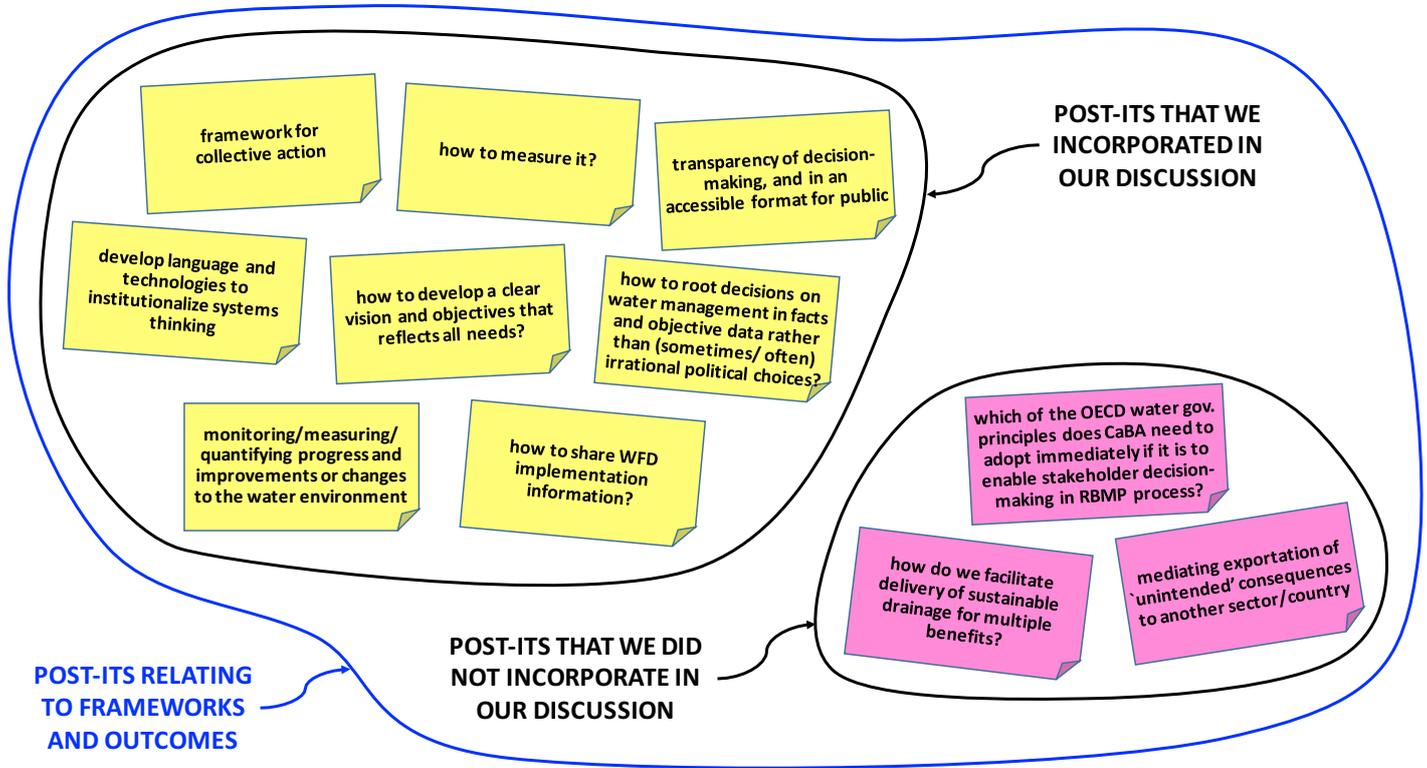
Collectively, we formulated the following system of interest:

*A system to [what] communicate with people by [how] using appropriate language, technologies and channels in order to [why] engage and empower them to make informed decisions and take concerted actions to improve (change) water governance.*

In this context, we talked about not necessarily involving

more people in water governance (as a lot of people are already involved), but about (re-)engaging people in ways that are meaningful to them. For example, we should be open to talking about all kinds of improvements to a local area, not just those that we perceive to be relevant/important to water governance. For instance, 'litter' or 'dog poo' might come up, as an intro into people's concern for the quality of their local environment. We noted that it is important to talk to local people about their area to establish the multiple benefits that improving their environment could deliver, and also about how actions should be undertaken, by who, and for what purpose, i.e. avoiding starting out with any assumptions or (mis-)perceptions that we know what might constitute an improvement.

To this end, we proposed that there is a need to develop a national framework to support and facilitate environmental change/improvement processes that are manifest by people (as individuals, small groups or larger organisations) in their locality. By focussing on local accountability and action, the framework would help to



**Figure 1** Our group's post-it notes

(re-)engage and empower people to make decisions and take actions to improve water governance. It could also help to bring about improved data collection and sharing to facilitate reporting obligations at local/national/international level.

We also identified some potential unintended consequences of developing the framework, including: possible growth in local democracy; increased demand for action; and other social benefits, e.g. arising from *'Have you thought about....?'*

This thought-process raised the question: How might we go about developing such a framework in practice?

Recognising that any such framework would need to meet the needs of a diverse range of stakeholders, we reflected on the potential to work with partnerships, such as Catchment Partnerships, towards developing the ideas and suggestions talked about in our group, and also the possibility of working with new and existing projects, such as the 'Urban Water Ecosystems' project and 'WaterLIFE' project.