More Sustainable Participation? Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Integrated Catchment Management

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ABSTRACT *This paper argues for realistic expectations of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs). MSPs are currently a hot topic in the water policy community, despite voices of disillusionment with participation in development work. Research carried out in Peru, Argentina, India, South Africa and Belgium suggests that platforms certainly can prove helpful networks in communication on and management of competing claims to water, managing coordination problems, coalition-building and/ or visioning. However, experience has put paid to implicit and explicit expectations from platforms, especially with a view to the integration of knowledge and actors. It makes no sense to separate distributive negotiation and politics ('bad') from integrative negotiation and social learning ('good'). Platforms mix both modalities of negotiation, and actors may strategically withhold or contribute their knowledge. Second, no significant power sharing (vertical inclusion) takes place. A typology of MSPs ranked by influence finds no platform with a significant mandate. It is suggested that MSPs are an institutional bargaining space that is especially useful for visioning and information exchange, but cautioned not to insist that 'water MSPs' confine themselves to water issues only, and to institutionalized groups only. For some stakeholders, the communication and information process itself is good enough, but others will want results: 'food on the table'. Some stakeholders will never join as they do not see how it benefits them and/or because they find it more advantageous to work around the platform. Initiators of platforms for stakeholder involvement in water management should therefore be very clear on what the participatory process aims at and can realistically achieve.*

Introduction

At the UNCED Rio World Summit in 1992, nine key stakeholder groups were identified that should be involved in environmental decision-making and management. Ten years later, the Johannesburg World Summit launched the concept of 'Type II' partnerships, multilateral voluntary agreements to address a common challenge. In different sectors of resource management, co-management arrangements between public, private and societal actors is promoted as a way forward, in which each sector carries out the task they do best. Recent years have seen promising co-management approaches in land care

(Woodhill & Röling, 1998), fisheries (Kooiman *et al.*, 2000), participatory wetlands management (Jongman & Padovani, this issue), joint forestry (www.mfp.or.id/new/me-shared.php, see also Bampton 2003). Hemmati (2001) notes a surge in productive multi-stakeholder dialogue in international fora.

From the same inclusion-oriented philosophy, Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) and their multiple variants such as (Multi-)Stakeholder Dialogue, Fora and Partnerships, are currently capturing the imagination of the international water sector. In the run-up to the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto (March 2003) the International Water Management Institute (IWMI) organized the Dialogue on Water, Food and Environment and the Dialogue on Water and Climate especially to promote basin-wide deliberative platforms, and the Second World Water Forum in The Hague in March 2000 noted that:

> ... there is a need for profound change in the way water is managed if we are to achieve any sense of sustainable water use in the near future. The empowerment of people at the local level to manage their water resources—the 'democratization' of water management—is essential.

The World Bank, Asian Development Bank and Inter-American Development Bank's water policies now call for participatory processes and a tripartite process bringing together public, private and civil-society actors led to the acclaimed World Commission on Dams report (2000).

This paper seeks to contribute to the development of a conceptual framework for multi-stakeholder processes in the water sector, highlighting the political aspects of MSPs. In one of its many definitions, 'politics' concerns the contest over the distribution of scarce resources (Heywood, 2002). Political science reminds us that people do not come to the table as blank slates but with an agenda, and this can have a beneficial or damaging effect on realizing coordinated action. The dominance of allocation issues in water management invites distributive negotiation (about how the 'cake' is cut), no less than integrative planning ('baking the cake together') (Aarts & van Woerkum, 2000), while the scarcity of resources invites resource capture ('taking the cake') (Homer-Dixon, 1999). Even the participatory institution itself can become a 'resource' prone to capture by cooptation rather than cooperation. Therefore it is especially important not to overlook the politics, in its positive and negative aspects.

This paper draws on experiences gained in the 'Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Integrated Catchment Management' project (May 2001 – December 2004), funded by the Dutch 'Partners for Water' consortium, and led by the Irrigation and Water Engineering Group at Wageningen University. The project carried out and supported PhD and MSc-level research on multi-stakeholder developments in catchments on four continents (South America, Southern Africa, South Asia and Europe).

The next section will introduce Multi-Stakeholder Platforms as networks for (a) dispute settlement, (b) adaptive management and (c) democratization. The following section will look at the issue of 'vertical integration', arguing that the level of co-management and power sharing so far has been low. Whether this is a disappointment depends on expectations raised. Six Types of MSPs found in the research are then introduced and are organized in increasing degrees of power sharing-influence. The next section then looks at non-participation, cooptation and integration and (self-) exclusion. The typologies build on those developed in Warner & Verhallen (2005).

What Are MSPs?

A Multi-Stakeholder Platform is like a roundtable where people with very different perspectives are gathered; a 'decision-making body (voluntary or statutory) comprising different stakeholders who perceive the same resource management problem, realize their interdependence for solving it, and come together to agree on action strategies for solving the problem' (Steins & Edwards, 1998). When people come together in platforms, they have multi-stakeholder dialogues. As Röling & Woodhill (2001) stresses, a multi-stakeholder dialogue is not just a conversation but also an interactive approach to getting things done.

The most contentious part of multi-stakeholder platforms is the 'stakeholder' part. Stakeholders are individuals, groups or institutions that are concerned with, or have an interest in the water resources and their management (World Bank, 1996). That means not only including direct water users, but also those affected by (waste)water management, as well as those involved in water resource development, management and planning, including public-sector agencies, private-sector organizations, NGOs and donors. The word 'stakes' connotes that capital can be actively raised or withdrawn, like in a game of poker. Considering that we all have a stake in water, we are all stakeholders, but many in society cannot switch their water stakes in the short run. We will conform to the discourse, because of the ubiquity of the word 'stakeholder' in this issue-area, but for the caveat that water management is definitely not a game everyone can take or leave.

The water sector's enthusiasm for stakeholder participation comes at a time when some disillusionment with participation in development has made itself felt. Having flourished for some 40 years in the field of development assistance, participation has shown serious flaws, exposed most famously in Cooke & Kothari's *Participation: The New Tyranny?* (2001), but also see Watson (2001).

A fundamental challenge is presented by the concept itself. Participation has been conceptualized as involving communities in water management. This suggests that people did not care and did not act before participation was encouraged. However, Long (2001) reminds us that participation consists of any strategies employed by social actors to alter their life-world. In this view one cannot 'do' participation, because individuals *always* participate in the social domain. Grassroots actors have always coped in some way or another through formal and informal means, no matter the effectiveness of government and already carry out a great deal of water supply and coastal defence governance without it being labelled. They develop robust and humane ways of coping with resource challenges whether or not with institutional support and sanction (Hewitt, 1998, also Kirschenbaum, 2003). In this sense, 'participatory development' is a pleonasm. This sociological view of participation, then, poses new challenges to the policy-maker, since participation as policy is placed within the wider range of political action. Participation takes place within (formally and informally) and outside institutional settings for participation, as will indeed be shown in this paper.

This is related to a second reason for disillusionment with participation: despite the best intentions dialogue cannot overcome political realities. Communities are not harmonious, homogenous entities, but are characterized by structural differences in access, clout, resources, literacy making themselves felt, tilting the playing field, not to mention extra community pressures.

In this sense, MSPs do not bring any real innovation. However, the intentional inclusion of multiple groups is not so usual in water management, and in that sense it is a welcome

change of habit. Until recently, participatory approaches have tended not to address the diversity in the social domain: water management tended to be mono-sectorial (WUAs only representing farmers) and relied on expert knowledge only. With an MSP, this diversity is not warranted either, but it is hoped that the specific aim of integrating different actor groups, perspectives, and values (not just including productive but also leisure/amenity and conservation interests) will make the endeavour more amenable to a more holistic view of the basin.

MSPs: What Is the Attraction?

Multi-stakeholder processes currently promoted by a cast of unlikely bedfellows: research and training institutions (such as IAC Wageningen and IWMI), donors (like IDRC), states (South Africa), NGOs (SNV) and water companies (Thames Water). What do they see in it? To explain the attraction of the concept, three key categories of rationales for MSPs will be discussed: (1) alternative dispute resolution, (2) adaptive management and (3) democratization and empowerment.

Alternative dispute settlement. A great many issues can easily be decided: they are straightforward; the evidence for and against is tidy, and people are clear on what they want—they can be decided by experts or, if need be, fought in court. Water issues are not. Exactly because of the different social values people attach to it, not least in light of the resource's irreplaceability, water issues easily become political and conflictive. In the 1990s, a number of conflicts on interventions (dams, irrigation systems, channels and privatization deals) came to the fore. These controversies attest to a great diversity in needs, interests, perceptions and cultures in dealing with water resources. Such diversity should not necessarily result in a confrontational situation, but can also trigger a multi-stakeholder process. Multilateral bargaining seems superior over bilateral confrontation, because it provides face-saving options (Zartman 1995), as well as opening the door to package deals. Therefore, MSPs may be established as mechanisms for mediation.

Despite ongoing apprehension about 'water wars' (McLoughlin, 2004), the 'water wars' narrative is now sufficiently discredited in the academic community (starting with Wolf, 1995). However, (sometimes violent) local water disputes continue to break out. Rather than a linear Malthusian connection between scarcity and conflict, intermediate factors between scarcity and violent conflict have been identified, recognizing society's social-institutional capital for regulating conflict (notably Homer-Dixon's (1995) 'social ingenuity', see also Turton & Warner, 2002). According to Turton & Ohlsson (1999) a sense of scarcity brings on a process of reflection, spawning social and environmental NGOs who demand greater influence in the decision-making process. This can then give rise to a multi-stakeholder dialogue to deal with the stress resulting from social dilemmas, which Jiggins & Röling (2004, p. 1) usefully define as the "unfeasibility or non-existence of an equitable distribution of a resource".

Therefore, Multi-Stakeholder Platforms are often hailed as ways of managing conflict between stakeholders over the management of water resources. Jaspers (2001), for example, sees a multi-stakeholder platform primarily as a forum for dealing with conflicting interests and may also play a vital role in conflict prevention and resolution. However, MSPs can open new spaces, working as 'Track-Two' mechanisms bypassing deadlocked formal (Track-One) processes (see http://iadc.iwa.org/en/Unit6.htm).

However, it is worth mentioning that while MSPs may usefully settle disputes, in the author's experience, MSPs do *not* generally solve conflicts in the sense of Frey's (1993, p. 54) definition of conflict: "two or more entities, one or more of which perceives a goal as being blocked by another entity, and power [of some sort] being exerted to overcome the perceived blockage" shows up conflict as the incompatibility of underlying objectives, of which access to water may be only one. In fact, MSPs themselves can even be a player in conflict—multi-sectoral coalitions (marked 'Type 5' in the section below) built on an aversion to a certain intervention, which then confronts and coopts the project's initiator. Consensus-seeking may not fit every situation or culture: the inclusive Dutch imprint on MSPs may make it less than suitable in adversative or litigation cultures in 'litigation cultures' such as the USA or Chile where social changes develop with clashes and jumps rather than through gradual motion, such as in the Netherlands. In a traumatized post-violence society like Peru, and in countries where states are eager to reach out to society more, like South Africa, the MSP approach as Alternative Dispute Resolution, consensus building and mutual fine-tuning (*concertacion*) can be a breather, a novel option worth exploring.

Adaptive management.   The adaptive management approach, which is rooted in studies of ecology (Holling, 1978), is an important component of a search for a new meaning for conservation, a meaning that is bioregional in scope, and collaborative in governance, as well as adaptive in managerial perspective. However, adaptive shifts such as that from a supply-driven to demand-driven mode of management are bound to create adjustment tensions and they are likely to be intensified as the realization sinks in that an adaptive shift to 'demand management' implies tough socio-economic choices (Ohlsson, 1998). In a water management context, adaptation refers to a society's ability to make a very necessary change to a more water-extensive economy under the stress of impending water shortage and climate dynamics. Indeed, the 1990s saw a dramatic shift in priorities for water resource allocation from agricultural production towards municipal (drinking water), industrial and environmental uses. Consequently, irrigation is increasingly seen as a 'low-value' use (in terms of 'jobs per drop') of water compared to other uses (Meinzen-Dick & van der Hoek, 2001).

Especially in countries where national food self-sufficiency is held to be of prime importance, the agricultural sector is still very much favoured for its strategic importance. The shifting power balance between agricultural and urban users means that the farmers do not automatically have the government's ear anymore. Irrigation or Drainage boards and Water Users Associations tend to have one function only and come from one social sector. Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM) likewise focuses on irrigators only rather than on fishermen, industry, navigators and urban water users, although PIM may indeed seek to represent different interests within agriculture: high-, mid- and lowland farmers, or smallholders and big landowners. However in (post-) industrial countries like the Netherlands and elsewhere, the primacy of agriculture is challenged by tourism, environmental conservation and industrial use. Farmers now have to share, and learn to negotiate, with other users and uses (Grigg, 1996).

A jointly recognized need to adapt to a new situation is at the root of the 'ideational' or 'cognitive' school of thought on multi-stakeholder platforms which holds that adaptation requires a cognitive process of 'reframing' policy problems (Gray, 1997). In a situation of complexity, actors are advised to leave their sectoral perspective behind to develop a shared perspective. Involving multiple voices can help *reframe* conflicts and work out

package deals that would not otherwise be possible. The idea is that all actors take into account both their own responsibilities and rights and those of the others.

Röling & Maarleveld (1999) are quite positive about the possibility of stakeholders becoming aware of their interdependence, their willingness to realize a situation in which people put themselves in each other's shoes and to address the common problem, unencumbered by political, institutional obstacles. The premise of this Habermasian approach is that it presupposes that through dialogue, perceptions and problem definitions will change and converge (Habermas, 1984; Poncelet, 1998, 2001). Once stakeholders see the interdependencies of their stakes in the shared resource, and agree to sit together to negotiate about pressing issues, they might develop the sense of ownership required to manage these issues, and manage the resource in a more sustainable way. The power of deliberative argument, it is hoped, will then transform interests.

Of course, this is a belief. The author has found very few examples of fora where stakeholders arrive at a common vision of what the problem is out of an acute awareness of their interdependent role in addressing it. Even in joint visioning processes, in observations by the author, stakeholders turn out to be pragmatists who will try and get the most out of the process for themselves. On the other hand, it cannot be maintained that MSPs are straightforward arenas for hard-nosed political bargaining, either. In a situation of unclear data, stakeholders find joint fact-finding, exchange and relations useful and, in several cases, enjoyable. MSPs also fulfil clear social functions, a type of bonding tends to take place when individuals meet face-to-face, which may facilitate empathy, compromise and experimentation (see also e.g. Poncelet, 1998).

Democratization and empowerment. While the water sector discovered partnerships between the public and private sectors in the 1980s and 1990s, the third party, civil society, tended to be sidelined for some time. Partly in response to public protests to large infrastructural projects (dams such as Narmada, channels such as the Hidrovia) and institutional changes (privatizations such as that in Cochabamba, 2000) sparked public protests, lawsuits and sometimes violence, participatory processes became widespread in the 1990s. This originated from a realization that people might actually be more annoyed by the way they were (not) consulted about the changes than by the interventions themselves. Bangladesh, for example, introduced its participatory guidelines on water policy in 1994 after repeated conflicts over flood protection schemes.

However, apart from the negative incentive of avoiding resistance when due process has not been observed, there have also been more positive impulses for involving social actors. Uphoff (1992) and Ostrom (1990) paved the way, reporting impressive examples of *self-organization* in resource management. Even where formal government has broken down, hitherto unrecognized systems are in place that achieve remarkable feats. In exchange for taking more responsibilities, civil society actors are given a greater voice in the management of the resource base they take a stake in. Their non-involvement seems a waste of potential for increasing the governing capacity to act on growing pressures—a wider range of actors brings a wider range of capacities, knowledge and alternatives, which can bring space and fresh air to an overloaded governance system. One of the key tenets of the Dublin Principles is the 'subsidiarity' principle—managing at the lowest relevant level. MSPs seem attractive alternatives for decentralizing management down to the catchment level. While several stakeholder processes have remained at the level

of institutionalized groups, who are skilled at negotiation, there are also experiments with citizen involvement, such as the Kat and Mtata Forums.

In view of the intractability of many water issues, the desire to initiate a joint learning process through joint fact finding (Aarts & Van Woerkum, 2001) may also be a reason for moving beyond majority rule or consensus. The knowledge, capacities and perspectives of different groups may be appreciated in getting a fuller picture of the problem, the uncertainties and resources available.

The profession of agricultural extension has started to respond to the finding that one-way communication was less and less acceptable to the targeted groups. They have views and knowledge too, with which the training on offer was not necessarily compatible. This led to new models for two-way dialogue, which expanded into a multi-directional (roundtable) model for knowledge sharing (Röling, 1994).

Joint fact finding and vision building, for example, as tried in the Nete Basin in Flanders, can be seen as a form of 'post-normal science' (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 1983) where lay and expert knowledge supplement each other to solve 'wicked problems'. A process of participatory knowledge creation does not mean bypassing experts, but rather a redefinition of the roles and strengths of expert knowledge, which facilitates debate rather than provides the answers.

Note that Multi-Stakeholder Platforms represent a special form of democracy, whose goals reach beyond multi-party democracy. They give allocated seats to different groups rather than majority vote, and make room for extensive deliberation, giving voice to weaker or smaller interests. This is especially promising in deeply divided areas or societies, where one group dominates in number and/or power positions. Apart from or additional to water-use sectors, different ethnic, linguistic, cultural groups may be included (Warner & Simpungwe, 2003). So-called DIPS (Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes) seek to 'democratize democracy', increasing the range of alternatives and scope of action (Bloomfield *et al.*, 1998). The inclusion of disenfranchised groups and perspectives is pivotal in this process.

Critically, action-oriented researchers (e.g. Boelens & Davila, 1998) see a different kind of potential for empowerment: mobilizing stakeholders into a multi-stakeholder alliance can be an important factor in bringing about social change, wresting greater control over water resources from the hands of the powerful. Because the intention is to include the wide variety of users, the underprivileged, the have-nots, the disenfranchised and not just the powerful, the platform can potentially strengthen the search for equity and democracy and hold an emancipatory potential. The paper will discuss real-life examples of such alliances in India and Argentina as 'Type 5' platforms later.

Integration: What and Who to Integrate?

Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue (MSD) is part of the 'holy trinity' that is currently mainstreamed in water management: Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), Multi-Stakeholder Participation and River Basin Management. Integration, the 'spirit' of this trinity, is about de-partitioning water management. IWRM promotes 'joined-up thinking' about aspects of water uses, while participation suggests 'joint management' with water users. For Mitchell (1990), a pioneering author in the field, IWRM means integrating:

- Relations between surface and groundwater, quantity and quality.
- Relations between water and land use (environment).

- Relations between water and stakeholder interests.
- Relations between social institutions through multi-stakeholder dialogue.

Because the stakeholders represent different partial interests, it is hoped that a wider spectrum of water management issues at basin level will be covered. Because of the involvement of multiple identity groups, MSPs are more likely to discuss multiple aspects of water management and facilitate trade-offs and package deals, approximating integrated management more than a single-issue platform.

However, 'integrated', holistic management needs to take many aspects into account that are hard to model and to square with each other; and then they need to be squared with participation. One should not necessarily expect the issue(s) that the platform covers to be about water itself. Water conflict tends to reflect wider concerns, different agendas and objectives. Water, being such a vital, pervasive resource, links socio-economic, environmental and cultural values and interests. When people come together to discuss water resources, water issues therefore easily interlink with other struggles—about land, health, housing, education, fisheries, poverty reduction, socio-economic development, culture and indigenous rights. Such links are structural and material, i.e. difficult to separate. In addition, links can be actively forged in negotiation to enable package deals. It is therefore essential not to exclude issues beforehand by insisting a water platform should deal with water only.

In the Lower Kat, Eastern Cape, South Africa, water scarcity and the occasional flood are not really an issue. The Kat Forum has dealt primarily with erosion control (Warner & Simpungwe, 2003). Conflicts over water are very often foci for much broader conflict, and likewise platforms are likely to cover them. In the Argentinian Patagonia, for example, a group of indigenous Mapuche approach the water issue as a vehicle for inserting their own identity issues into the agenda (Moreyra & Warner, 2004), which seems to support the claim that integrated water management requires an integrated society (Warner, 2000).

This has important consequences for 'solving' multiple-use conflict. If the conflict is not only, or not really about the water resource itself, there are no simple supply-side solutions. The agenda broadens. 'Inclusiveness' not only pertains to actors, but also to issues. In this sense, issue linkage *can* bring package deals that generate support from stakeholders that otherwise would not lend their support and energies to the process. Of course, they can also be used to obstruct such deals.

In view of its focus on the political, it makes sense to look at the 'vertical' and 'horizontal' dimension of actor integration in MSPs. The vertical dimension denotes the hierarchical, top-down aspect, and concentrates on power sharing and leadership. The horizontal dimension, discussed next, denotes the width (scope) of MSPs, which is the level of inclusion of actors and issues. A later section connects the two, as the paper focuses on non-participation: actors' expectation of not gaining insufficient influence, or the expectation of power imbalance when they do, can be a reason for voluntary or forced exclusion.

Vertical Vertigo: Power Sharing?

In theory, an MSP can bridge the gap between grassroots action and top-down policy-makers, but it proves to take rather a lot of effort. No matter whether the initiative is bottom-up or top-down, the platform initiator needs to coopt the others into cooperating. In each case, there are real distrust issues to overcome. Governments will struggle to

convince grassroots actors of the legitimacy of the platform, that it has a real impact rather than being a way of controlling or placating them. Similarly, bottom-up platforms have to convince the government they are not anti-government, given that several platforms stepped in where government was felt to fall short, as in the case of Peru. The country's former President Fujimori, who pursued a highly centralist policy, sought to disband the 'El Nino' MSP that self-organized in Ica in response to the El Nino-induced floods in 1998 (Oré, 2004), for its anti-centralist orientation (see also Warner *et al.*, 2003 on the usefulness of MSPs for flood disaster response).

Due to the increasing complexity and interdependence of resource issues, neither 'top' nor 'bottom' can go it alone (Kooiman *et al.*, 2000), but while states are increasingly aware of this, they also are not comfortable with relinquishing control. It is tempting for the initiating party to retain control of the process, while offloading some of the less desirable tasks. Since water policy in most countries is primarily in the hands of the state, participation is in fact power sharing, and as Bruns (2003) notes, a 'ladder of participation' really indicates the degrees to which the government shares and delegates power to non-public actors. Vanderwal's (1999) picture (Figure 1) shows that grassroots organizations have quite different images of the ladder than government organizations.

Given government's reluctance to cede power and, as will be seen, citizens' limited aspirations to take it, it is not surprising that most participatory processes remain at the *information and consultation* stages, the lowest rungs of the ladder (an area Arnstein (1969) rated 'phoney participation'). Initiators of ambitious infrastructural or institutional projects, such as dams, channels and privatisation, try to change people's minds about a controversial issue by staging a participation process, a 'promotional (selling) approach' to participation. The sunk costs of great projects also encourage the desire to control the process. While having a genuine opportunity to give an opinion clearly means the right to say 'no' (or indeed 'yes'), initiators feel they cannot afford the project being discontinued halfway through, which is a major project risk to investor confidence and reputations. Both in the UK and the Netherlands, a 'promotional' approach has therefore been used for flood alleviation projects, to pre-empt expected resistance to the intervention. As a result, a controlled form of participation is preferred that prevents politicization, as if participatory processes will magically 'create' a support base. However, support-base creation can prove to be a fallacy of social engineering.
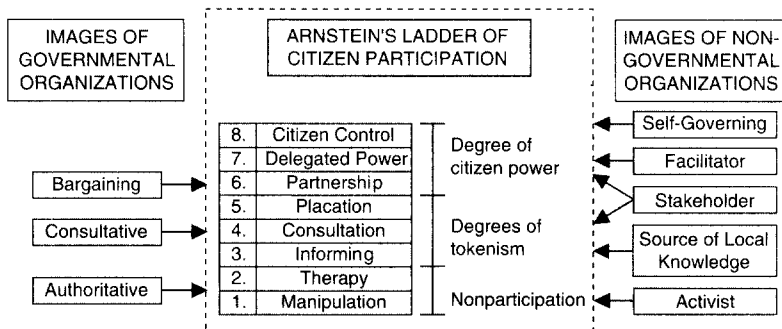

Figure 1. Participatory implications of organizational images. *Source*: Vanderwal, 1999.

It seems obvious that participation at least involves listening to people. Questionnaires, quick surveys, even hearings can be extractive, forestalling alternative problem formulations. Participation has often been seen as the contribution of the target group to predefined programmes, in which case participation becomes manipulative or even coercive. Often, empowerment is read as 'educating the illiterate/non-professionals', but actually requires a fair share of expert un-learning as well, i.e. de-emphasizing established worldviews (technocratic, modernistic, rationalistic) in order to be able to understand alternative contributions (cf. Warner & Simpungwe, 2003).

What happens when a government seems genuinely keen to share and empower? In South Africa, a public sector intent on making amends for a divisive past has opened decision space to all interested and relevant individuals and groups to form catchment management fora. However, opening up this policy space does not mean that space will (or can) be used without due awareness raising, training and support. While it is easy for well-organized groups such as rich white farmers to coopt the process, the black community does not speak out. Trust needs to develop over time and social interactions and rules and roles need time to gel. On the contrary, black farmers often fail to see the gain in participation if there are no quick wins ('food on the table').

In Peru, post-Fujimori governments have been sympathetic to MSPs as a new layer of water government, but are held back by entrenched interests (Oré, 2004). Here too, there are many enthusiastic local initiatives for MSPs, but the author observed that not much is happening on the ground.

Therefore, both bottom-up and top-down initiatives for participatory resource management need to (re)think how to gain trust and legitimacy with other stakeholders, especially with respect to what they have to offer that makes stakeholders participate. For this they need to generate internal (intra-platform and delegate-constituency mandate) and external support from governments and donors. A platform with weak links to its constituency is an elite enterprise, while a platform without mutual trust remains beset with power politics. Platform members who are highly motivated to make their endeavour work will contribute and seek to attract a variety of resources ranging from public support (constituencies) to legal support (mandate) to financial support (a budget). If such support is simply unavailable, the success of platform sustainability is compromised (Warner & Verhallen, 2005).

Facilitation, Leadership and Dominance

According to Röling's (2001) definition, an MSP is a 'contrived situation' in which negotiation takes place. The organization of this contrivance is easily subject to decisions that, whether consciously or subconsciously, express preferences over what and who shall be included. Who controls this arena, that is, who decides who will participate and what issues will be debated? Stakeholders are not usually self-selecting and self-motivated enough to participate in platforms, they are more often invited by external facilitators to participate or present themselves as an organized interest group. If these facilitators are not well informed and totally scrupulous about stakeholder selection, this necessarily puts potentially interested, but disorganized parties at a disadvantage. Proper facilitation is therefore a major focus in the literature, and training on participation (e.g. www.iac.wur.nl/msp/) focuses on proper facilitation. However, in practice facilitation without leadership is bound to fall short. In several of the case studies that the author

participated in it was found that it is usually a charismatic leader or facilitator (or facilitating organization) driving the platform along, who motivates people and translates between the different life-worlds of experts and laymen.

The role of this leader proves to be delicate. When platforms are top-down, a government agency or hired consultant may take on the facilitator role. When bottom-up, an NGO or university may be the leader. The task of the facilitator is an important one and includes getting the right amount of diversity and power balance.

When the initiator and facilitator roles are too mixed, it can go at the expense of trust in the facilitation process. For example, South Africa's Department of Water and Forestry (DWAF) initiated the formation of the Mtata forum as part of a wider thrust towards a Mtata Catchment Management Strategy. Stakeholders, rightly or wrongly, felt that DWAF and consultants controlled the process (Smit, 2003). This must have caused some disappointment because South Africa has exerted itself to scrupulously scrutinize applications for Catchment Management Authorities (the next level up for participatory water management) for a proper balance of power between stakeholders (see e.g. DWAF, 2000). Their approval has been a tortuous application process with multiple rejections before the first CMA (*Incomati*) could be inaugurated (Warner & Simpungwe, 2003).

An overly dominant chairperson or facilitator is not conducive to a fruitful process. Indeed, in many negotiation situations a single actor dominates, calling the shots in any important decision. Even where they exert hegemonic leadership, that is, where others accept the authority of the leader (and free-ride on the benefits), this role can encumber a diversity of voices. If the leadership is vested in only one or two visionary individuals, their falling-out or departure can mean the dissolution of the platforms.

Thus, in Bangladesh many cases are found where the local elite, for example, an industrialist or landowner, will almost automatically become the chairman of the forum, and in many cases appoint his wife or a daughter as member of the platform to see to stipulated gender balance (van Betuw, 2004; Becx, 2005). Sluice gate operators and participants in participatory processes complain of intimidation by hired musclemen. In one-party systems, likewise the ability to dissent is limited. In such cases, diversity cannot be formally guaranteed and 'cooperation' means accepting the inevitable, the way a detainee cooperates with the police. A better 'balance of power' is needed to make sure important dissenting voices can be heard.

Finally, dependence on external resources is a major Achilles heel in dialogues. Once the facilitator leaves or the project has run its course, there is no internally generated dynamics to take over. The Sabarmati platform is currently struggling now that Canadian and European support has run out. The Yakunchik platform in Peru in this respect was especially unlucky because it fell victim to its success (Oré, 2004). As Fujimori's authoritarian government gave way to a democratic government in 2000, several key people in the platform were coopted to work with central government. This sapped the platform of its most dynamic leaders and took momentum out of the process.

The present discussion has highlighted the issue of mandate and clarity of roles in facilitating MSPs. The word 'platform' suggests a level playing field, which is not often evident. The term obscures existing power differences. The public sector as network facilitator assumes a disinterested role that may not do justice to the fact that the state still controls the legal and material resources and therefore ultimately calls the shots. Likewise, the predominance of social leaders means that there is never going to be a power balance. Edmunds & Wollenberg (2001) and Warner & Simpungwe (2003) have suggested some

ways of levelling the field, such as providing translation services and transport, and holding meetings at local, non-intimidating venues, but these cannot meaningfully address structural inequalities.

Six Types of MSP

The situations encountered in this study that more or less fit the description of MSPs show quite bewildering variability. This section presents an empirical typology of multi-stakeholder processes according to their degree of power sharing. Based on such PhD and MSP research as was feasible in the course of the MSP-ICM project, it is by no means representative of the global MSP scene, but it may be indicative as a preliminary heuristic.

Six Types of MSP have been established:

1. *Social network*: group of people, working in different organizations that enthusiastically pursue social change but has weak links to their constituencies. They struggle to have any influence at all.
2. *Focus group*: interested citizens and organizations giving feedback to proposals, providing information, voicing their concerns and needs, at the invitation of the government. Thus they influence the problem or solution definition only indirectly.
3. *Service or mediation organization*: the platform raises money or support for joint projects for improving water supply or disposal.
4. *Crisis management platform*: the platform tackles difficult political issues or crisis coordination issues in a non-threatening environment.
5. *Social movement*: an alliance for protesting a project (for example, a dam), by staging mass protests, can negotiate better amenities or changes in the project when they manage to coopt their adversary into negotiation.
6. *River basin (co)management organization*: devolving decision and management tasks to stakeholders (co-management).

Type 1: Social Network

Rather than actual platforms, which suggest a physical meeting place with an organizational structure and secretariat, Multi-Stakeholder Platforms may in fact primarily be *networks*. In a network, problem-solving capacity is dispersed (Glasbergen, 1995). Platforms and networks are both metaphors. While platforms suggest a form of institutionalization, network management (Kickert, 1993) suggests shifting alliances, not necessarily tied to one place.

The 'Yakunchik' MSP in Ayacucho, Peru (Oré, 2004), for example, are in touch with each other, but do not actually have a secretariat and an office at their disposal. Even if they have currently little concrete action to show, interviewees strongly emphasize that they value the fact that the multi-stakeholder network exists. MSPs can make life better for participants, if only as social events and creating social bonds. They also help disputing parties to partly understand other stakeholders' views and interests. Those involved stress time and again the crucial importance of the process itself as a communication and visioning process, especially in low-trust societies such as post-violence, post-dictatorship, post-apartheid societies.

In the same networking vein, MSP 'twinnings' were co-organized by Wageningen UR in the Eastern Cape together with Rhodes University to stimulate mutual learning about the different experiences of a 'top-down', state-organized (Mtata) and a 'bottom-up', university-organized (Kat) platform, but also worked especially well as a social gathering where story-telling and information-sharing alternated with singing, dancing and making new friends (Simpungwe, 2003 on www.dow.wau.nl/msp).

Type 2: Focus or Visioning Group

Mitchell (1990) suggests IWRM should start with multi-stakeholder visioning, because nobody has responsibility for the future, conflicts are likely to frustrate proceedings. Indeed, MSPs have proved fruitful in planning and visioning processes advocated by the government, with a discrete number of sessions rather than an indefinite process. This is the type of MSP encountered most frequently in the MSP-ICM project. The fact that time-bound visioning MSPs tend not to share power to any significant degree does not in itself prove a major obstacle, while the participants were aware of the limits to their input. Stakeholder groups often do not necessarily want to take responsibility for co-management of the resource, which they see primarily as a public task. However, they do want to be heard and not left out of the process, and, in the case of the Nete, a Flemish sub-basin of the Scheldt, were annoyed if they missed out on key information. Wageningen's IWRM team supports an informal twinning process in Europe between visioning partnerships in Scheldt and Tisza basins to exchange experiences with the 'River 21' method (Ruijgh & Verhallen, 2002).

This participation process can be said to be extractive in the sense that for relatively low investment, the government gets an advisory body that informs them about the range of interests and positions involved, and the policy aspects that are likely to generate fierce opposition. In turn, stakeholders are the first to hear about new policies and can request more specific information or amenities.

Type 3: Service Organization

An MSP may also seek to take advantage of the breadth of the network to generate external support, catering to a collective need that would not be served well by individual lobbying efforts. The dialogue on the Sabarmati basin in Gujarat, India (VIKSAT, 1999; Kumar *et al.*, 1999) joins existing networks of agricultural and industrial stakeholder groups with a facilitating NGO: VIKSAT. By joining forces, this platform managed to raise funds for, among others, water conservation facilities (see also Moench *et al.*, 1999). The groups involved sometimes meet in a plenary, but more often bilaterally, to work out shared issues or present a proposal for technical assistance.

Type 4: Crisis Management Organization

When the platform is used especially for occasional dispute settlement or negotiation processes, it can be expected to lie dormant for long stretches of time and occasionally spring to life. The Zwin Commission, a multi-stakeholder body comprising Dutch and Belgian governmental and non-governmental actors to manage an area of great natural

beauty, is emblematic, like a may fly, which shows only once a year in spectacular swarms, it only showed in exceptional political weather conditions.

Other transboundary MSPs such as the Rhine Commission similarly seem to flourish addressing incidents and crises, not for permanent water management. Even commissions regulating international rivers shared by friendly states, often cooperate as little as possible National autonomies still prevail in day-to-day governance.

A local variety of a temporary 'intervention MSP' for water dispute settlement was set up in Tiquipaya, Bolivia to mediate between urban and rural users, suppliers and local government actors over a controversial sanitation project that had led to violence and the resignation of the mayor (Faysse *et al.*, 2005). Post-disaster coordination platforms as in Ica, Peru (Oré, 2004) can similarly be headed under this rubric.

Type 5. Social Movement/Alliance

A different, more radical type of multi-stakeholder alliance is found in response to unpopular interventions or policies. Here, negotiation is the outcome of an anti-intervention campaign.

In Cochabamba, Bolivia, urban and rural organizations joined together to protest against the alienation of water rights, which were to be vested in a private joint venture water supply company. This would also carry major price hikes for drinking water. The siege of Cochabamba made the global headlines in the spring of 2000 as the 'Cochabamba water war'. As people blocked all entrances into the city, the government responded with violence, but international outrage at the bloodshed forced the government to roll back the privatization. The Inter-American Development Bank responded by making new loans conditional on a multi-party deliberation process between stakeholders: CONIAG (Bustamante, 2003). Stakeholders duly participated to help unblock the credit facility in what some would call 'window-dressing' in view of the very limited achievements of CONIAG as a negotiation platform.

Several 'anti-hegemonic' protests have been staged in India in the form of non-violent resistance movements to the dams in the Narmada valley, Gujarat and Southern Maharashtra and citizen initiatives on the Chalakudy River. In the dispute over the Tar Ohl dam, which the Maharashtra state government was pressed to build quickly in view of a window for funding, a social movement composed of low-caste landless and smallholders, backed by progressive industrial leaders, organized mass sit-ins to coax the Maharashtra state government into a more cooperative response to civil protest, more cooperative, that is, than the initial ham-fisted police intervention. Interestingly, the alliance involved both groups that stood to gain from a new dam and those who stood to lose form resettlement. In doing so, the platform managed to coopt rather than alienate the government, bringing social pressure to bear to negotiating amenities for resettled evacuees.

In each of those cases, the resource issue is the focus of much wider social struggles: a multi-sectoral network forms to join forces against a common touchstone, initiated by government.

Type 6: River Basin Organization

The catchment level is emerging as the 'natural' unit for water management in Europe and elsewhere. Water resource management has long been a top-down concern of many states,

and water authorities were organized along administrative boundaries. River basins cross over administrative boundaries. Now that hydrology rather than administrative or cultural boundaries dictate the management scale, states are forced to work together.

Public participation in the management of river basin areas is explicitly stipulated in Article 14 of the European Water Framework Directive (EWFD) (European Union, 2000), which states that the general public should not only be informed, but also consulted in the formulation of management plans. However, there are indications that the understanding of participation in the Directive accepts public involvement being scaled back to consultation and information provision (Type 2).

Like the EWFD, the Brazilian water management model is fashioned after the French model (Agences de l'Eau), which allocates seats to key stakeholder groups at catchment level. However, Mostertman (2005) and others found that stakeholders did not have much influence on the process because it was dominated by the state and large companies.

Devolving power to lower-level actors is hard enough for states, delegating power to trans- and international actors proves to be even harder. Sovereignty remains sacrosanct, both with respect to societal actors and other nations. Only on special occasions a multi-stakeholder dialogue can be resorted to as a 'Track Two' activity, as Santbergen's Zwin case shows.

Do Stakeholders Have to Participate?

As noted, the expectation that opening space for participation will mean enthusiastic involvement of stakeholders turns out to be unwarranted. A prevalent mistake concerns overestimating their a priori motivation to participate. People are not apathetic, but they can be frustrated into thinking that nothing ever changes, even if they put time and effort into participation. Participation also involves considerable opportunity costs to stakeholder groups, which may outweigh the benefits of cooperation.

One key driver for propensity to participation is the salience of the water issue. When the management challenge is immediate and urgent, such as flood risk in a threatened area, social pressure for all to participate will be high. In the Netherlands, where half the country is below sea level and no wide gaps in landownership developed, even the non-participation of a single smallholder could upset the communal system for dike raising and maintenance. Their power of obstruction made the voice of minorities a force to be reckoned with. In areas where water *scarcity* is the most pressing issues, this salience is less pronounced, since source depletion is a creeping catastrophe. Stakeholders may cooperate as they are interested to hear what is going on or perceive possible benefits, but if there are few wins (Yakunchik platform) or project money runs out (Sabarmati platform), the platforms run out of steam.

Apart from immediate crisis conditions, it emerges from the case studies that not everyone will be or even wants to be integrated, especially where integration seems a euphemism for assimilation or cooptation. However, the process may empower those participants who are equipped to negotiate and take advantage of their voice, of new information. Edmunds & Wollenberg (2001) have noted that participatory processes can actually *dis*empower groups. The process itself may be coopted by groups to capture the resource. Water is a scarce resource and therefore subject to control strategies. Less well-endowed groups are usually badly organized and easily coopted, swayed, or bribed.

Research in Peru (Den Hond, 2003) suggests that the poorest groups may not participate, because their opportunity costs are too steep or because they are not aware of the process.

   The author's MSP research came across the following in- and exclusion processes.

Deliberate exclusion.   Reasons adduced for exclusion from the MSP process include: the group is not representative enough; there are too many groups representing similar interests; a reputation for being difficult and vocal; a tendency to politicize everything. The Vera Mapuche in San Martin (Moreyra & Warner, 2004), who are affected by the water claims and subsequent pollution by a popular local skiing resort, are such a group, who have found they are actually more successful outside the platform.

Self-exclusion.   Not all stakeholder groups want to participate. The opportunity costs of participation may outweigh the benefits of cooperation. Opportunity costs are political as well as economic. Actors may think twice about joining the decision-making process when they run the risk of being coopted, to the extent that they (are perceived to) become part of the elite, thus losing their legitimacy with a constituency that expects it to rally support against specific issues. Where the forum systematically outvotes minorities, they will probably lose interest in the forum. The platform is seen as 'hegemonic', serving the interests of the elite rather than the marginalized, so that their participation only legitimizes decisions made by others, leaving little scope for promoting their interests on the agenda. It may then be more advantageous to drop out of the platform and mobilize a constituency outside it. On the other hand, powerful groups, may have overwhelming political or economic clout and fail to see a need (that is, the problem and solution interdependence) to negotiate with other groups and share power—they reckon they only stand to lose.

Late entry.   Belated or no entry to the platform may signal that there is no a salient water issue, so that the resource remains unpoliticized. Despite Mollinga's (2001) claim, water is not *always* politics in the sense of contest for scarce resources (Heywood, 2002). However, it may also be that the actors' awareness of their interests or their organization and mobilization process have yet to happen. The stakeholders have not developed consciousness of salient issues and become what sociologists call a 'social subject' initiating collective action (Ramirez & Campos, 2004). Only by organizing themselves and making their voices heard can they hope to be incorporated in a second run
   In such cases, a type of 'outreach' platform facilitation may well be required. It can take a lot of time for groups, especially those who have little education, to grasp the issues and develop the wider view associated with policy-making at catchment level. This requires raising of awareness and training. In South Africa, NGOs (AWARD) and academics (Rhodes University) have successfully invested in doing just that, supporting platforms in the Sabie Sand (in the north) and the Lower Kat (on the Eastern Cape). In the Scheldt river basin, international umbrella NGOs facilitated local NGOs, joining forces and eventually entered the platforms. This suggests that stakeholders should be given time and facilities for training.
   Others will bide their time and wait for the right moment to enter the fray. This of course raises the issue of whether they should accept or renegotiate all the decisions that have been made up to their accession. Two cases were found in which farmers belatedly

demanded a seat around the table when they became aware of the usefulness of the platform. In the Scheldt estuary, Flemish farmer organizations gained a seat on the estuary platform later in the process and seemed to insist on 'preferential treatment' from other participants to bring them up to speed with proceedings. Another participant protested and the farmers eventually consented to equal treatment (Verhallen, pers. comm. 2005). In Peru, the farmer's union JUDRA gained observer status in the 'Yakunchik' platform in Ayacucho, sparking a debate about whether they should be incorporated in the platform or, conversely, whether the platform should be incorporated in their well-oiled lobby (Oré, 2004). This dispute remains unresolved.

Stakeholder action outside MSPs. It has been seen that participation processes may happen, even if it is not quite how its initiators intended. Non-participation in participatory processes does not mean that groups will not become active *at all* in the political arena. Groups may feel that participating in platforms robs them of leverage. Once galvanized, radical environmental or identity groups have the option either to join and coopt the formal process or not to participate in it so as to have their 'hands free' in staging extra-parliamentary protests outside the platform, such as sit-ins, or less visible ways of putting pressure on decision-makers. Such counter-hegemonic participation may not be what MSP initiators had in mind, but participation in the Longian sense it certainly is.

Combination of strategies. Groups have been observed that 'have their cake and eat it', that is, operating both inside and outside the participatory process. They participate actively in the platform, but also leak documents or use the press to have their way. Fighting, negotiation and social learning may happen in turn, or even in parallel.

Conclusion: More Sustainable Participation?

MSPs are a particular type of organized, facilitated and framed participation where the setting, rules, definition of the problem or topic and actors invited may to some degree be dictated by the initiator. This may catalyze energies and synergies that would otherwise remain untapped, but will only attract actors if they see a benefit in this particular type of participation. This gives some clues about the chances of a sustainable participation process.

Sustainability "indicates that a plan, initiative or physical development project can be implemented and supported over time without depleting or adversely affecting the resources and management capabilities available to it" (www.uvm.edu/ ~ plan/ masterplan/ glossary.html). Pretty (1997) has defined agricultural sustainability as aiming at an appropriate level of external and internal resources and processes necessary for a productive, environmentally sensitive and acceptable agriculture. *Mutatis mutandis*, translating Pretty's definition to multi-stakeholder participation, highlights the vital importance of continued support-generating capacity (see also Warner & Verhallen, 2005). Enduring support proves to be relevant in all the stages of an MSP's life cycle—the formative stage, 'take-off' stage and in times of (temporary) decline. After all, the MSP processes researched here all required a very long gestation time before they came into their own, ranging from nine years in South Africa to 50 years in a Dutch-Belgian transboundary watercourse management platform, the Zwin Commission. Both a long trust-building process and a lack of 'shocks' that create the awareness to jolt the 'sleeping beauty'

into coordinated action may account for this lengthy process. The salience of the issue to the stakeholders combined with a sense of interdependence seems to be the single most important predictor of MSP longevity.

Of course, the question whether participation *should* be sustainable is legitimate. Why should all multi-stakeholder platforms necessarily persist? There is merit in one-shot or clearly time-bound multi-session processes (Röling & Woodhill, 2001). However, for many MSPs the ambitions are higher: self-management or co-management, ownership and social transformation. However, this actually takes a lot of work and considerable resources. The research finds that just sitting together does not solve problems. People have to bring, or develop, skills for making a multi-stakeholder process work, and need to keep catering to stakeholders' immediate needs and interests to 'reproduce' the platform, accepting that not everybody will participate.

This puts into perspective the cognitive assumptions underlying multi-stakeholder processes. In an ideal world, persons collaborating in platforms initiate (and continue to initiate) dialogues in which they fully grasp the complex situation, including an understanding of the different perspectives and interests. They are able to acknowledge those perspectives but are able to see beyond that to come to innovative and inspiring ways to tackle the complex issue, in an accountable and transparent process that can be communicated to their constituencies. However, it is a mistake to expect that a participatory, multi-stakeholder process frees resource governance from political processes. Given the short-term mindset of most political processes, democratization does not guarantee sustainable outcomes either. So far, water MSPs have rarely been 'co-governed': power is rarely shared or devolved. As a power sharing institution, its effectiveness tends to be limited due to in-built weaknesses, such as lack of mandate and support-generating capacity, such as powers to levy water fees. Given the little power stakeholders can actually exert in current set-ups, in places it is surprising that they even participate. Early wins are essential to keep people interested. While social bonds help tide networks over temporary lulls (Type 1), roundtables ultimately only work if they bring results, 'food on the table'. Especially in developing countries, the politics of the belly (Bayart, 1993) are highly relevant.

The long gestation time and frequent lack of concrete outcomes present problems in attracting start-up funding for MSPs from donors, who like to see quick and quantifiable results. This does not mean we need to give up on platforms, rather that it is essential to pay due attention to mechanisms for self-sustenance, that is, enhance a platform's support-generating capacity, and most of all avoid raising unrealistic expectations. Time-bound visioning or focus group processes, immediate post-crisis coordination and dispute resolution encountered were more effective MSP functions than durable co-management platforms. Great expectations inevitably bring disappointment, which in turn will make it much harder to involve people again in future participatory initiatives, however well intentioned. Hence one is well advised to 'do it well or not at all'.

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