

Report from the Advisory Group Meeting

Oldenburg, 20 June 2018

Attendants

1. Stefan Kuks (Chairman), Vechtstromen Water Authority and University of Twente
2. Max Hansson, Karlstad University
3. Emiel Crauwels, Municipality of Herentals
4. Christof Winterhalter, Municipality of Oldenburg
5. Liesbeth van Riet Paap, Dutch Agency for Public Works and Water management
6. Anke van Houten, Dutch Association of Regional Water Authorities
7. Willem Jan Goossen, Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management
8. Ulrich Scheele, University of Oldenburg
9. Rob Bonte (Facilitator), RHDHV
10. Susan Lijzenga (CATCH Project manager, rapporteur), Vechtstromen Water Authority

Absentees

1. Floris Boogaard, Tauw N.V.
2. Jonathan Glerum, Anglian Water
3. Peter Steen Mikkelsen, Technical University of Denmark
4. Theo de Bruijn, IAA architects
5. Lisa van Well, Swedish Geotechnical Institute

Role of the advisory group in CATCH and outline of the report

The members of the advisory group (AG) have two different roles:

1. To reflect on CATCH by giving feedback on the progress of the project and give advice for future activities: During the meeting this is achieved by a reflective dialogue between the AG members based on a progress report of the project and introductory presentations.
2. To contribute to knowledge dissemination of CATCH outcomes: During the meeting the roles of the AG members and CATCH partners are discussed as well as possible (roles in) dissemination activities of each of the advisory group members in this process are defined.

The recommendations of the AG are not binding. Nevertheless, within the project there is an urge to use the recommendations for thorough reflection on the progress.

This report first presents the summarized advice of the AG, which is followed by the comprehensive minutes in the annex.

Summarized advice

The AG sees a strong coherence between the CATCH partners and thinks the Water Sensitive City (WSC) concept is very interesting. Cities can be in a transition and there are many possible paths to follow. The path depends on history, the current situation and the city's vision of the future on where and how to continue. The advisory group comes with the following five recommendations:

1. Users of the Decision Support Tool (DST) will be the municipalities. They are often the main actor responsible for climate change adaptation. The value of the tool increases when more stakeholders are involved, keeping ownership within the municipality. In certain situations, it might also be valuable that a region or province acts as a user, assisting in starting the process.
2. Currently, the benchmark is developed much further than the other components of the DST. Generally, a benchmark indicates a ranking. But the outcome of this tool must be helpful for its users. As constructed now, the benchmark can also be a means to start a process and state an ambition. Comparison between cities provides input for learning from each other. Use the strengths of the benchmark as it is composed now, but be aware that the term 'benchmark' can cause opposition. Making use of the positive qualities of a benchmark and choosing a good name for practical use will be helpful.
3. Looking at the proposed deliverables the AG has questions about the DST and its components. Is this exactly what mid-size cities need? Considering the limited available capacity of mid-size cities, it is strongly advised that the DST is easy and appealing to use. With the proposed governance assessment tool in mind, it is therefore recommended not to make the DST too comprehensive. The advisory group recommends a soft guidance; *a navigator that will lead mid-size cities along the cliffs of climate change adaptation*. Accompanied with good examples, the benchmark results and roadmap, the DST could be most effective.
4. For further development of the DST, the advisory group recommends taking four dimensions into account. The AG acknowledges that these dimensions might already be elaborated in the elements of the WSC framework used.
 1. Scale: Keep in mind the interplay between spatial scales. The scale to consider is always one level higher than the area you focus on.
 2. Scope: Combine water with developments and measures related to climate mitigation, energy transition and health improvement.
 3. Time: Work towards a robust goal for the future, being aware that climate is still changing, and you are working in a stand still situation. Work in small steps, make progress visible and find opportunities to act.
 4. Actors: Find ways to involve stakeholders in all stages from problem definition to implementation of measures - while keeping in mind scale, scope and time. Collect good guidance instruments and most of all good examples and share learning experiences.
5. It is recommended to make a navigational tool that will enable the mid-size cities to work both only on a large challenge, but also in short rounds of learning experiences. This is important as a large, integral approach might be too complex for the situation a given city is in.

The above recommendations indicate for the AG that some of the terms and definitions in the proposal might have to be redefined. It is expected that there is room to do this, as long as the perceived necessity is clearly linked to the needs of the mid-size cities and the goals of the project.

Finally, all members of the AG have mentioned their possible roles for dissemination in the project. This will be further elaborated in the detailed communication plans that are to be developed.

Annex: Full minutes of the AG meeting

The CATCH project in general

In general, AG members are positive about the CATCH project and its goals and ambitions. The WSC concept is interesting. Cities in a transition and the adaptation path towards a water sensitive city is never blueprinted. The history of a city and the current situation give input on how to continue through the different transition city states. There are multiple scenarios to choose from. The AG also feels that (small and) mid-size cities do need the special attention as mentioned in the proposal. This makes the project very relevant.

For the project team, the AG reckons that the CATCH partnership is unique, being composed of 12 different organizations. Maybe even 12 unusual suspects, each having the ability to learn from each other and with interesting stories to learn from in a European context.

Needs of mid-size cities in North Sea Region (NSR)

The AG starts a debate on the needs of mid-size cities. Especially about the way this may be elaborated throughout the project and in the deliverables to be produced. The needs as included in the proposal are well recognized. Municipalities and other local authorities are understaffed and the pressure to deal with climate change is urgent. The effect is that they won't be interested in complex tools. To meet the specific needs the tools to be developed should be appealing and easy to use.

To have a proper notion of the city needs, it is also necessary to sharpen up the definition of climate change adaptation and the way that it is translated in the project. The climate is still changing. Working on climate change adaptation means that you work for the future – so have this in mind. Consider to focus on a horizon, e.g. 2050 (dimension of time perspective). This motivates the need for a flexible evaluation concept as a tool.

Users

The main users should be professionals of mid-size cities. The deliverables should address this target group to start a good process towards climate change adaptation. For entering a thorough process, the input of the tools should be provided by multiple stakeholders. And the results should be made accessible for multiple stakeholders as well. Then the benchmark will function as a reference situation to start the adaptation planning process and to feed a discussion on responses, adjustments and new adaptation action. Users may also be regional institutions, like provinces. These institutions may have the capacity to guide or facilitate even smaller municipalities to go through a process to become more climate adaptive. Värmland and Overijssel can be in such a position.

Deliverables

The deliverables that the CATCH project is expected to produce, were thoroughly discussed. Using the name *tool* leads to confusion as this implies a perception of an instrument that provides a blueprint, or clear answers to questions. What is really needed for mid-size cities will be more like a guidance or a navigation book on 'how to sail along the cliffs'.

The benchmark in general is liked. What is appealing to the AG members is that by benchmarking cities against the WSC framework, the position of a city or area becomes clear. From the WSC

transition framework, a first impression can also be derived on what could be a future ambition and what steps to take. This altogether makes this benchmark against the WSC framework an appealing instrument. This way the benchmark can truly start a process to become climate adaptive. Secondly, the potential of comparing makes it possible to start learning from other cities. And when a benchmark is completed in cooperation with multiple internal and external stakeholders, a process starts in which the input is validated by discussion and learning.

Besides, the AG also indicates constraints in the benchmark. Ranking cities might not be inviting for cities to join, as this might have political impact. For example, in the Netherlands the governmental administrations are exposed to several kinds of benchmarks. It is a concern that the name “benchmark” will be felt like an instrument that takes a lot of effort to fill in and will eventually be used to for naming and shaming. It might be good to rename the benchmark for use in practice, having in mind the goal that we want to achieve.

Considering this, the advisory group advises a soft guidance, a navigator that will lead mid-size cities along the cliffs of climate change adaptation. The need for a soft guidance also implies that the tool should not be complex, but easy and appealing to use. And most of all provide guidance for aspects that especially mid-size cities in the North Sea Region must deal with. Preferably without being prescriptive, because every city will adopt its own transition path.

From this perspective, AG members are concerned about the elaboration on the underlying tools (MC¹, GAT², ECO³) that will be developed. For instance, the Governance Assessment Tool, of which an outline is provided, is a research instrument. Questions are raised on how to translate this in a workable way that delivers a tool that will genuinely help cities.

Keeping in mind the vision of a soft guidance, the AG group believes that this can be achieved accompanying the benchmark with a roadmap or navigation tool *to sail along the cliffs* and sharing good examples from the pilot projects and from elsewhere. The practice partners have thorough experience to provide that. In cooperation with the universities the practice partners can capitalize these experience into learning experiences for the NSR. The AG advises not to make the DST too comprehensive. Otherwise it will become too dominant in the project and eventually even lead to tools that are not appealing and usable for the target (user) groups.

The AG advises to pay special attention to four aspects that can also be related into to three principles of the WSC theory; cities as:

1. Water sensitive communities and networks,
2. Water catchments
3. Ecosystem providers

Scale

It is important to be aware of the spatial scale you work in. The scale might be plot, neighbourhood, city or catchment, all having their own points of attention. Reference is made to the “tragedy of the commons” on plot level, where neighbours do not want to invest in problems they themselves don’t perceive. And generally there is interplay between scales. The catchment to consider is always one step bigger than the area you focus on. Attention for the scale is needed.

¹ Management Cycle Tool

² Governance Assessment Tool

³ Ecosystem Services Tool

Scope

Planning for climate adaptation to become a water sensitive city in the long run, it is necessary to combine water with other challenges: climate mitigation, energy transition, health etc. While dealing with climate adaptation, this larger scope is not clearly visible in the project at this moment. In addition, the term 'water sensitive city' appears to be sectoral. Although the city states in the transition framework imply an integrated approach, to make the tools work for the long run, this integral scope should be emphasized.

Time

For many municipalities, the difficulty starts with the question when to start and within what time perspective. A clear view on the bigger picture for the future might be a challenge to produce. Besides it might also not be a good means to communicate externally. The big picture has a big chance to end up in nothing, because the described challenge is too big or too complex. Concerning many (not all) mid-size cities and their challenges an incremental (step-by-step) way of working seems beneficial. While having a bigger picture in mind, small steps are made in the good direction.

- perform small project, not calling them pilots since it implies experiments.
- make use of other developments and opportunities to make a climate resilient choice
- show/ communicate the small results to the public and politicians.

When done consistently, the small steps will eventually lead into mainstreaming climate adaptation measures. For this purpose, communication and sharing learning experiences are very important.

Actors

Find ways and give guidance on how to involve actors/stakeholders in all stages of the process from problem definition to implementation of measures keeping in mind scale, scope and time. Collect good guidance instruments and most of all good examples and learning experiences.

Considering a more integrated approach and a larger spatial scale enhance the number of affected stakeholders. Complexity of the challenges becomes bigger. For cities, it is important to make a specific choice on what can be workable within its city's state. This is also a plea for the step by step approach that might be most feasible for most mid-size cities. A grand design might otherwise lead to a big failure (but of course can lead to a big success as well).

Finally, it is advised to make the proposed tools flexible to function on the aspects above. Then cities and actors can use the tools to make short learning cycles and adapt their routines with guidance of the tools. This makes the tools valuable and inviting.

Dissemination activities of the Advisory group

Assuming the CATCH project delivers results that the AG group members consider good, all members do see a role in dissemination.

Anke van Houten's role can focus on connecting CATCH to national activities in The Netherlands. She likes to use the good examples, such as presenting the Stadsbeek in Enschede at the Dutch Delta Congress, and introducing the DST elsewhere.

Max Hanson's knowledge concerns social learning. With this he can especially be of use for Arvika and Värmland for the use of the tool and experiences and bringing the experiences further in the county. The project also provides own new learning insights.

Ulrich Scheele will use CATCH and the gathered practices on working with pilots and small projects and upscale them into mainstream practices. In Oldenburg, metropolitan area climate change adaptation is an important topic. This might be of use for dissemination in the area.

Willem Jan Goossen has good faith that with many Dutch partners, thorough dissemination in the Netherlands will take place. He offers his networks, especially on European scale for dissemination activities. Willem Jan afterwards sent an advice from the European Climate Adaptation Partnership that can be of use for the CATCH partnership. See: [advice CAP](#)

Christof Winterhalter indicates that Oldenburg can learn from the tool and the practical examples. Changes can occur when mutual exchange occurs. Therefore, examples are helpful. Through such examples, CATCH can bring something into the daily work.

Liesbeth van Riet Paap wants to make a connection with Rijkswaterstaat (RWS) but needs to think on how to do this. CATCH can also be incorporated into the department for EU cooperation. The connection to the C5A, an NSR Interreg project proposal in progress, is evident.

Stefan Kuks closes by stating that together with the other Dutch members of the AG, he will work on dissemination in the Netherlands and mentions the CATCH+ project that will be developed to start learning from CATCH in the Overijssel Province of the Netherlands.

Process after this AG meeting

The report of the AG will be shared amongst all project partners. During summer, a first meeting of the DST team for reflection on the recommendations will take place. In September, during the partner meeting in Antwerp, the results will be discussed jointly. At this moment, it is expected that the uptake of the recommendations will make it rewarding not to wait to long for a second meeting of the advisory group. The next AG meeting is planned to take place in the beginning of 2019. This may be separate from a partner meeting.

For dissemination activities, the members of the AG that were not able to attend will be asked for their possible roles as well. Then a connection will be made with the communication and dissemination activities that will be performed on project level as well as on EU, National and regional levels. This makes all activities supporting to the project and its participants.

In the coming months, the project manager will keep the AG members informed about necessary developments and come up with a date for a new AG meeting.