



# Water Co-Governance Conference 2020

Transnational learning from governance projects:

Sustainable Water Governance: Improving effectiveness of (technical) measures through communication and co-governance approaches

## 25.-26.02.2020, Oldenburg (Germany)

## Documentation & Summary of discussions

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## Introduction - Background and objective:

As a water provider the Oldenburgisch Ostfriesischer Wasserverband is one of the big water users. They deliver a public service: drinking water. Still the OOWV finds itself increasingly in a position of self-defence, torn between providing citizens, industry and agriculture in different parts of their supply area with water. Both protection of groundwater quality and quantity management are core activities of water providers. Concepts such as ecosystem services or co-governance have become increasingly more importance in recent years. „Governance“ connects all these issues. Projects with a focus on governance study the development and implementation of technical and non-technical measures for water management – and how they depend on legal contexts or conflicting uses.

However, we cannot solve these problems alone but need national, transnational and international cooperation. Since 2002 the OOWV is aware that cooperation with national and European partners is important. The Wasserverband is engaged in 12 national and international funding projects. Four of these projects focus on the topic of water governance (WaterCoG, STEERM, goCAM and TOPSOIL). The conference brought together the results of the WaterCoG, Topsoil, STEER and go-CAM projects. The conference furthermore established a link to a practical example of citizen involvement, i.e. a Climate Café coordinated by Hanze Hogeschool of Groningen which invites students to learn about water quality and climate change.

This document summarizes the discussions and provides access to the presentations held at the conference. With its focus on benefits and needs for (future) transnational cooperation, it also aims to deliver feedback to the Secretariat of the North Sea Programme regarding relevant points of the new programme points.

## Summary of discussion in technical session

The conference offered five technical sessions on issues related to water co-governance, plus an overall discussion on lessons learnt and important issues for the upcoming North Sea Programme period. This section summarizes the discussions during the technical sessions. Links to the presentations can be found in the programme table further down the document.

First, results from WaterCoG pilots in Denmark, Sweden and Germany and from goCAM were presented in the session **“Dealing with complex ecosystems: How can co-governance approaches support water management?”**. They pointed out that stakeholder involvement can improve trust and efficiency for implementing measures. However, building trust in data needs time and ongoing dialogue. Local cooperation is necessary to implement new measures. Stakeholders need to expect their own benefits in order to invest time, money and other efforts for co-governance processes. In the Danish WaterCoG pilots, one driver for local cooperation was that the farmers union wanted to keep their say and their influence on the specific form of measures and their implementation. They cooperated to not have to deal with unsuitable top-down regulations later. Also, the German results from goCAM and WaterCoG showed that dis-trust in data often originates from or is at least linked to other conflicts. Integrating local knowledge and linking monitoring data to local observations is important.

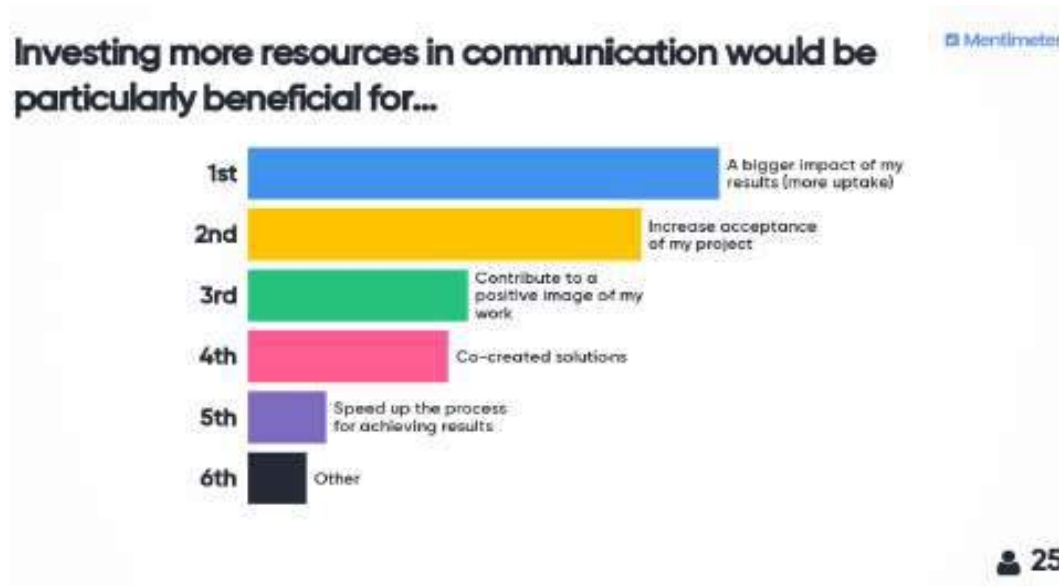
In **part 1 of the session “Climate Change Adaption of Regional water balance”**, the presentations dealing with water quantity and salinization of groundwater focused on the implementation of technical measures and how to approach climate change. Aspects of co-governance were surfacing when participants pointed out the need for baseline enforcement and a level playing field which contributes to the motivation of local stakeholders to implement measures of climate change adaption or (ground)water protection. This need has to be ensured by the authorities.

In **part 2 of the session**, the focus was on protecting water quality as joint effort by agriculture and water management. Here the importance of involved and convinced farmers as multipliers for other farmers was confirmed in the discussion. Farmers telling other farmers about their experience and confirming the applicability and usefulness of a measure is often more convincing than the testimony of technical experts, even if they come up with a good story and solid data. This was the experience in both the WaterCoG Texel Pilot and the TOP-SOIL UK1 pilot. The discussion also tackled the question why many farmers are reluctant to engage in pilots. The biggest challenge seems to be the difficulty of changing the daily practice, especially since most pilots need substantial investments and produce a dip in income at first. This stresses the importance of farmers with financial scope, either because they have no family to support or because they have financial reserves. These farmers are more likely to change practice and act as multipliers. Once they have proven that the business model behind the change is profitable and sustainable, others may follow.

In summary, changes in land management may be patchy but at least they are beginning to show. Furthermore, the discussion stressed national differences. For example, while the success-based compensation approach by the OOWV rewards per acre of changed practice, in UK1-pilot the approach is to benefits for the farmers don't have to be as specifically defined but build on general win-win for both water management and farmers.

Under the headline **“PR & Citizen Involvement: What are the impacts of good communication and citizen involvement?”** the participants discussed the need for communication in transnational projects. External communication was considered particularly beneficial for improving the uptake of project results and increasing their acceptance (see results below). Challenges such as communication of complex data or ecosystem aspects were also addressed.

Figure 1: Results from menti.com survey in PR & communication – session.



In the final session “**Ecosystem Services: How can the concept contribute to protecting the regional water balance?**” the audience was very interested in The Rivers Trust experience on how to make local natural capital visible to local stakeholders. It was highlighted that local discussions on priorities for the protection of different capitals need to take place in order to make use of the ES concept. An interactive map was developed for use local community decisions. It needs to be supported with instruments which provide incentives for changes in land management practices. Incentives can include payments for ecosystem services. The “level playing field”, and the importance of sticking to the polluters-pays principle was again emphasized during this discussion.

Before the general discussion, the results of the Climate Café Oldenburg were presented to the audience. The international and multi-disciplinary group of students demonstrated that within a few days of focused work (including stakeholder interviews and a design thinking process) a number of creative ideas came up on how to improve the awareness for storm-water management and private responsibilities. Results from the interviews showed the impact of recent events: While in Oldenburg stormwater events were a big problem before 2017, the last two dry and hot summers made heat and drought the more pressing and challenging climate change impacts in the minds of the interviewed citizens.

## What do we need in the upcoming North Sea Region programme period?

### Benefits of Transnational Cooperation

The presentations and discussions during the conference showed that the project partners strongly appreciated transnational cooperation because it delivers additional impetus to deal with new challenges such as climate change adaptation. Similar approaches in different countries allow comparing and developing them. Seeing how competent authorities and organizations in the North Sea Region approach, struggle and solve complex issues such as climate change adaptation or changed land

management practices fosters own progress. It strengthens the stamina of one's own organization to keep working on issues such as land management practice, building up trust in new groundwater data, the challenges implementing change. It also shows the need for great staying power. The involvement of local stakeholders sometimes makes them engage in transnational discussions. Projects provide the vehicle to test new approaches; communication and dissemination of results also help to get the European idea across.

## How can transnational cooperation best deliver? What do we need in a new programme period?

With regard to a future North Sea Region Programme, the following aspects were emphasized:

- Participants named a number of issues which stay central for their work, and which they would like to see addressed (see figure below). **Climate Change Adaptation** will be the central challenge in the coming years, crossing all sector boundaries and probably leading to the emergence of new issues. It should be the overarching theme of the coming programme period to allow future issues to evolve yet still be covered by the NSR programme. Here, **awareness raising** for the need to take action is one central issue. Climate change adaptation includes both technical solutions and changes in mind sets and behaviour.
- Climate change being mainly a water challenge, it is important not to focus on quantity issues only. **Water quality** needs to be addressed as well both in terms of old challenges such as nutrients immission or newer challenges such as pressures from chemical residuals or antibiotics.

Figure 2: Which issue should be prioritized in the upcoming NSR period? Responses during a menti.com survey. 14 participants, multiple terms could be submitted.



- **Understanding water balance and in particular groundwater flows and quality** still needs more attention. Groundwater can be used to address various challenges: aquifers can store heat and buffer extreme weather events (heat/floods). Water has a high heat capacity. Groundwater hard-

ly flows. This both offers great opportunities for storing summer heat underground to heat the houses in winter. So I think energy will be a relevant factor the coming decades. I do not see this as a risk but as an opportunity. So energy is an opportunity to become more careful with groundwater. In this context technical and governance issues around **data sharing** have been an issue in most modelling and monitoring approaches of TOPSOIL pilots.

- **For the new programme period, a holistic approach across policy objectives is central.** In the former programme it was sometimes difficult to decide where to “pitch the project” - which priority should be chosen, if more than one were addressed. It would be good if the future programme provides a structure which fosters integration across policy objectives or priorities instead.
- Identification of good solutions is at the core of NSR Interreg projects. To better capitalize on the outcomes of projects the question needs to be: **How can we upscale good solutions?** Learning from transnational partners is extremely beneficial. This includes linking local activities with transnational exchange. For example, the approach of catchment officers in UK was transferred via WaterCoG to Denmark and Sweden. Structures and concepts that further these links (such as the TOPSOIL transnational challenge workshop) need to be maintained and fostered in the new programme period. In addition, new projects must be allowed (and encouraged) to use insights from previous projects. It is vital to further develop similar projects and concepts in all countries to allow for comparison.
- For a better uptake of climate change adaption measures, **involving and not only informing citizens** is still a challenge. But how can we “motivate the masses”? Stakeholder participation has been addressed in various contexts by now, and showed that one of its challenges is to motivate citizens and society as a whole to take actions. **Citizen Science** is one of the relevant approaches in this context. **Co-Governance** approaches need to be further tested and upscaled in more local areas. The upscaling of pilots however needs an individual adaptation to local contexts.
- In addition, reaching out to the next generation will be significant for ensuring good ideas with innovative approaches in the future. If **students, young professionals and even children** learn more about water and the climate, they can develop approaches in the future that offer mutual benefits. These can be exchanged and discussed across national borders. Furthermore, involving students or schools can give additional energy and new perspectives to projects. Another advantage is that pupils, teachers and students are important multipliers to the broader society.
- Another motivation for the partners to engage in transnational cooperation is **to foster the “European idea”**. Stronger communication and outreach stabilize the bridge between local and European level. The work in the WaterCoG Swedish pilots for example also reflects an enforcement of local democratic processes. This has been indirect results of working with our tools providing structures for participation and trust. And organically the water issues have then come to include a local landscape perspective which also involves historic views of land and water use.
- **Ecosystem Services** seems to be a promising concept for this. It enables an increased understanding of and the benefits from ecosystems and considering these services in spatial planning. We need ways to easily communicate knowledge and to apply the ecosystem services to local authorities and other key stakeholders.
- The programme also needs to feature more **transnational learning within the projects**. Partners profit most strongly from the exchange with transnational projects: exchanging and comparing the differences in governance setting, identifying shared challenges and why different solutions work differently in different regions is important. While workshops do help with this goal, they



have their boundaries and need to be part of a larger set of measures to reach different target groups. Farmers for example are aware of the development in other countries but tend to be critical towards an application of knowledge not produced locally; their willingness to take part in transnational workshops can be limited as many of them are rather introverted than explorative. Here a mentoring approach can be one strategy to involve them and foster exchange.

## Programme and Links to presentations

You can find all presentations at <https://northsearegion.eu/watercog/news/four-european-projects-come-together-to-discuss-sustainable-practices-to-water-co-governance/>.

24-26th ClimateCafé Oldenburg: Stormwater Management and Climate Change Adaptation (organized by University of Applied Science Groningen)

### Monday, 24th February 2020

16:00 Steering Group Meeting WaterCoG  
19.00h Dinner

### Tuesday, 25th February .2020

9:00 h Registration, Coffee and Poster Exhibition  
9:30 h Welcome by Egon Harms, OOWV

**Short introduction of the projects: WaterCoG, goCAM, TOPSOIL, STEER, (no presentations) and of [the Climate Café](#)**

10.00 – **Dealing with complex ecosystems:** How can co-governance approaches support water management? –  
11.30

Chair: Barry Bendall, The Rivers Trust

- WaterCoG Danish pilot ( part 1: Susanne Mortensen and part 2: Sebastian Zacho, SEGES)
- WaterCoG in Sweden: To handle complexity (Björn Lagerdahl. Vattenmyndigheten Västerhavet)
- Preparing Water Rights Applications: Improving stakeholders' support for water rights applications- Lessons Learnt from German WaterCoG pilots (Ilke Borowski-Maaser, Interessen Im Fluss)
- How can co-governance approaches be encouraged? Insights from go-CAM (Konstantin Scheihing, OOWV) (presentation not publicly available)
- Discussion

11:30 Coffee Break

11.50- **Climate Change Adaption of Regional water balance, Part I:**  
13.00 Increasing resilience of groundwater towards climate change

Chair: Rinke van Veen, Provincie Drenthe

- Results from Dutch TOPSOIL pilot: Climate Change Adaptation for water-shortage in groundwater management (Jan den Besten, Hunze en Aas)
- Mitigating the impact of climate change on groundwater resources - approaches in go-CAM (Konstantin Scheihing, OOWV) (presentation not public-

ly available)

- Discussion

13.00 Lunch

14.00- **Climate Change Adaption of Regional water balance, Part II:**

15.30h Protecting water quality as joint effort by agriculture and water management

Chair: Andrea Lenschow, University of Osnabrück

- Agriculture and water management partnership working needed to protect surface and groundwater quality (Peter Nailon, Wear Rivers Trust)
- German TOPSOIL Pilot (GE5): Goals and Results (Christina Aue, OOWV)
- STEER: Increasing Good Governance for Achieving the Objectives of Integrated Water Resources Management. Franziska Meergans (Universität Osnabrück) (presentation not publicly available)
- WaterCoG Texel Pilot: Salinization (Arjen Grent, Hoogheemraadschap Hollands Noorderkwartier)
- Discussion

15.30 Coffee Break

15.45- **PR & Citizen Involvement:** What are the impacts of good communication and citizen involvement?

16.30 h

Chair: Stevie Swenne, VMM

- Video examples from [TOPSOIL](#) and [Catch](#)
- Dutch WaterCoG pilot: Climate stress test and atlas (Arjen Grent, Hoogheemraadschap Hollands Noorderkwartier).
- Discussion with interactive surveys based using menti.com:
  - o Resources for communication
  - o Communication Challenges

16.30 End Day 1

18:30 Transfer to city centre

19:00 Dinner at Glut and Wasser, Stau / Hafen Oldenburg

## Wednesday, 26th February.2020

9.00- **Ecosystem Services: How can the concept contribute to protecting the regional water balance?**

10.00h

Chair: Christina Aue, OOWV

- Video: [WaterCoG – Natural Capital](#)
- Natural Capital & Ecosystem Services – tools for co-governance (Barry Bendall, The Rivers Trust)

Discussion: What are the lessons learnt? Which questions are still open?

10.00 Coffee Break

10.15 **Results from ClimateCafé Oldenburg on Stormwater Management and Climate Change Adaptation-**

Presentation by students participating in the parallel ClimateCafé:

Involvement of Citizens Climate Adaptation in Oldenburg

10.45 **Sustainable Water Governance: How can we improve? – On which issues could transnational cooperation best deliver good results?**





**OOWV**



Discussion with input on the status of upcoming Interreg VIB Programme Period –  
message from the Secretariat of the North Sea Region Programme

Chair: Ilke Borowski-Maaser, Interessen Im Fluss

Next steps / How to proceed

12:00 –

13:00 Uhr

Lunch & End of Conference