Chapter 1

The Beauty of the Beast: Multi-Stakeholder Participation for Integrated Catchment Management

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Introduction

Policymakers, donors, NGOs, water managers – all are intrigued by the sound of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms (MSPs) as new forms of cooperation in the face of (imagined or real) water conflict. MSPs appear as networks for cooperation and negotiation involving multiple sectors or actors within a watershed.

A widely accepted definition defines a platform as a 'decision-making body (voluntary or statutory) comprising different stakeholders who perceive the same resource management problem, realise their interdependence for solving it, and come together to agree on action strategies for solving the problem' (Steins and Edwards 1998: 1). It is like a roundtable, where people are gathered with very different perspectives. From a functionalist perspective, MSPs are perceived as problem-solving institutional innovations, to democratise water management, to manage conflict, even to make water management more efficient. Once people see the sense of involving multiple voices, it is felt, they will be broadly accepted as the way forward in dealing with the increasing complexity, diversity and dynamics of water management. But what is actually going on, and how do we approach our research and analysis? What are we actually talking about? Are 'platforms' even physical organisations or are they loose networks for planning?

Studying Multi-Stakeholder Platforms means zooming in on a phenomenon without very clear prior definitions (see below). Like the elusive 'regimes' of International Relations, they are not necessarily 'things out there', institutions with offices, bye-laws and secretariats, but inferred patterns of behaviour and interaction, singled out of a complex reality and labelled 'MSP' because having this class of constellations seems to add to our understanding of reality.

As a new phenomenon, Multi-Stakeholder Platforms are beset with problems, which are easy to expose. However, rather than dismiss the phenomenon out of hand, we propose a more constructive approach. Multi-Stakeholder Platforms

1 Annemiek Verhallen, Flip Wester and Nicolas Faysse merit special thanks for their constructively critical comments – all disclaimers apply.

for Integrated Catchment management (MSP-ICM), the Wageningen project on which much of the present volume is based, sought to study and analyse what MSPs are, how they came about (development) and what they do for stakeholders in practice (functioning): do they make a difference? Can their performance be improved and their sustainability enhanced? This latter objective includes the question whether MSPs bring on the kind of learning and empowerment their proponents expect. Rather than call out for the hunter as soon as we spot one, let's look out for the beauty of what we like to refer to as 'the Beast'.

Key research questions for this book:

1. Do multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs) make a difference?
2. Are MSPs compatible with integrated water resource management (IWRM)?
3. Can (and should) MSPs be sustainable?

MSP, IWRM and ICM

Dialogue is now increasingly recommended and applied to the management of common-pool resources like coastal management, fisheries, land care (Campbell 1998) and, especially, forest resources (Grimble et al. 1995; Edmunds and Wollenberg 2001, Shannon 2003). In the run-up to the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto (March 2003) the International Water Management Institute, IWMI, organised the Dialogue on Water, Food and Environment and the Dialogue on Water and Climate especially to promote basin-wide deliberative platforms. Water supply companies now organise MSP-type consumer panels. A workshop at Wageningen explored the usefulness of MSPs for disaster response. While obviously an increasingly popular pet, MSP as a newly emerging social life form still requires proper determination.

The present study applies MSPs to integrated catchment management – a 'holy trinity' of three currently almost unassailable water governance ideals: integration (IWRM), participation and catchment management within hydrological rather than political boundaries. IWRM is about decompartmentalising water management, respecting the interactions and internalising the externalities that come with a sectorial approach. After Mitchell (1990, 1998) we can see it as a multi-layered systems approach to water management, integrating:

1. Relations between surface and groundwater, quantity and quality
2. Relations between water and land use
3. Relations between water and stakeholder interests

To which we would add

4. Relations between water institutions (coordination)

Combining these four seems a perfectly logical way forward for a water sector in need of modernisation. But they inevitably bring a multitude of daunting

challenges: 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. First of all, it requires a radical change in management culture. IWRM is not just the sum total of all the isolated facets of water management, but a search for the added value of integrating relevant (f)actors. **Nigel Watson** (Chapter 3) decries the tendency of some to see IWRM as 'more of the same'. He argues that IWRM requires a totally different institutional set-up along the lines of MSPs. The particular beast this institutional zoologist has spotted is a *Cariboo* – in fact an acronym for seven criteria: Common vision, Adaptive capacity, Resources, Interdependence, Balance, Output and Outcomes.

MSPs seem helpful in realising common visions, realising a balanced outcome of adaptive processes, once people realise their resource interdependence. Still, as **Bruce Mitchell** (Chapter 4), an early and authoritative champion of IWRM notes, integration and participation seem to pull in opposite directions – people are motivated to participate in a clear, single-issue, close-to-the-bone area, while integrated management, because of its complexity, seems to invite centralisation. There are clear similarities between the two, though: both IWRM and MSP are ways of managing increasing degrees of variety and variability. In that respect, MSPs are a logical companion to IWRM, reflecting the same variety of interconnected social uses and users that IWRM reflects (Grigg 1996).

As the third leg of the tripod, the catchment level is emerging as the natural unit for water management. Slowly but surely, these adopted dogmas are set to revolutionalize water governance arrangements (regimes), in Europe (under the Framework Directive), South Africa (the 1998 Water Act) and elsewhere. Water resource management has long been a top-down concern of many states, and water authorities followed administrative boundaries. Now that hydrology and ecology rather than territorial administrative or cultural boundaries dictate the management scale, states and regional authorities are forced to work together across boundaries, and treat water bodies as part of ecosystems. Involving stakeholders in decision-making, with the accountability and transparency requirements that brings, these developments necessitate a new phase in an already changing deal between the public, private and civil-society sectors, which, as **Malcolm Newson** of Newcastle University maintains (Chapter 5), challenges and revolutionises the prior 'technocratic' outlook.

The catchment as best practice is not without its detractors. Wester and Warner (2002) question its current unquestioned, 'naturalised' status. Not only may, as Allan has it, the 'problemshed' transcend the scale of the watershed, neither stakeholders nor decision-makers naturally gravitate to this level. Fischhendler and Feitelson (2003) argue that due to the common spatial discrepancy between benefits and costs of cooperation at the basin scale, other special scales are to be advanced in order to offset this discrepancy. Their US-Mexico case presentation includes similar denotations on the importance of issue-linking across river basin borders as Meijerink (1998) does in his dissertation on the multilateral rivers Scheldt and Meuse negotiations.

Fighting or Learning?

While nobody disputes the legitimacy of stakeholder participation, the writings on MSPs come from very different worldviews – one in which people change things by cooperative learning ('cognitive school'), and one in which things only change by changing the power balance (the 'power school'). These diametrically opposed worldviews are most clearly expressed in the view of cooperation and conflict. A conflict framework sees negotiations as zero-sum with winners and losers, a cooperation approach sees win-win.

On the cooperation side, the **cognitive school** is interested in whether joint gains can be obtained through learning. Aarts and Van Woerkum (1999) usefully contrast two types of negotiation – distributive and integrative negotiation. Distributive negotiation is antagonistic, interest-based, mainly concerns the cutting of the cake, actors keep their cards close to their chests. Integrative negotiation starts from a commonly perceived challenge, involves 'baking the cake together' and joint social learning.

The cognitive or Social Learning approach is deeply influenced by the ideas of Jürgen Habermas, who advocates aiming for an authentic speech situation. The idea is that as stakeholders start talking, a process of learning by doing takes place in which power gaps and institutional hindrances are broken down. The attraction of the Habermasian approach is that it presupposes that through dialogue, perceptions and problem definitions will change and converge (Poncelet 1998). An aversion to (party) politics and conflict informs this particular literature (Hemmati 2002). In a situation of complexity, actors are advised to leave their sectoral perspective behind to develop a shared perspective in a process of reframing (van Woerkum 2002). This requires skilful facilitation – if badly done, a reframing process can of course result in a totally strategic (or expedient) 'vision' with a high deal of equifinality (each interpreting the result in highly particular ways), without addressing the actual dilemmas.

In a genuine dilemma, each side is defensible from a particular perspective (Hoebeke 2004). The important thing is to bring the dilemmas, the conflicts, out into the open and discuss them. A good facilitator puts sufficient time into divergence before aiming for convergence. In fact, it may not be possible to converge and it may be necessary for all to accept a hard-won compromise. But that openness and responsiveness requires a great deal of social trust, something that for example in Perú, as in many other locations, is still developing. Thus, any 'concertation'[2] means a combination of conflict, negotiation and, where possible, consensus-seeking. The effect of multi-stakeholder participation, then, is not to depoliticize issues (quite the contrary), but to expand the legitimacy base beyond government, beyond 'the experts'.

The 'cognitive school' of MSP sees facilitated social learning as a helpful modality enabling new forms of governance – as IAC Wageningen puts it, 'between

2 The word 'concertation' is not really English, but has taken pride of place in the French and Spanish discourse on roundtables. It has the connotations of 'concerted action' or 'co-ordinated consensus-seeking'.

the extremes of top-down "expert"-driven decision making by government and "letting free markets rule" lies the idea of facilitated social learning'.[3]

The Århus convention expresses the belief that, in the environmental issue-area, improved access to information and public participation in decision-making will enhance the quality and the implementation of decisions and contributes to the public awareness of environmental issues (UN-ECE 1998). Indeed there are known cases where the stakeholders themselves collect, manage and interpret the information, using a joint information system.

Multi-stakeholder platforms may be set up to act as a sounding board rather than a policy-making body. They are like think tanks or focus groups, providing policymakers with ideas and feedback from selected social groups. This arrangement interestingly seems to bring enough benefits to both initiators and consultees. In addition to this outside-in benefit, platforms can help a better *spread* of ideas (within the platform and inside-out). Communication then may be a vehicle for two-way information/knowledge exchange, joint knowledge building and dissemination.

Indeed, **Annemiek Verhallen**'s Flemish case study (Chapter 6) shows that, when it is clear that the platform is only consultative, stakeholders are happy to give feedback and, crucially, be in the loop about what is going on. Her contribution discusses a platform in the Nete, a sub-basin of the river Scheldt, where 13 stakeholder categories were invited to join in developing a vision. She investigated attendance, adequacy and exchange of information and satisfaction with the process.

It should be noted that this was a situation in which savvy, well-educated stakeholder representatives negotiated. Yet it is hard to prove that any joint learning occurred due to participation. While no doubt people learn by doing, i.e. acquire new information and ways of thinking due to their participation, we find that the 'social', mutual, collaborative aspect, is not necessarily happening. The critical condition here is not only the recognition of interdependence, but also the willingness of all involved to take joint *responsibility* and learn their way into addressing the issue facing all. Negotiation that looked integrative may turn out to be distributive after all, but also free-riding, opportunism and double agendas are obvious pitfalls. In the Nete case, for example, there was very little social learning in evidence – several actors were listening in, but not really contributing.

What Should MSPs Do? Multiple Rationales

The definition of MSP that started the chapter off comes from the prescriptive end – the ideal-type MSP is imbued with a positive value connotation. The quest for preconditions for MSP success is related to the level of expectation and ambition as to what platforms should do. Expectations of MSPs are rather high. From the emerging literature, we take three key strands: MSPs as a mechanism of Alternative Dispute Resolution, for adaptive management and as a vehicle for democratisation and emancipation.

3 www.iac.wur.nl/services/training/index.htm?regular/MSP_seminar.htm

Dealing with Conflict

According to Jaspers (2003), a stakeholder platform plays a vital role in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. Resource conflict at different levels continues to ring alarm bells. In the mid-1990s, water discourse briefly became dominated by the literature on *water wars*. Water, it was claimed, is in crisis (Gleick 1993), and increasing scarcity would lead to violent conflict (Starr 1991). This came on top of an already widening post-Cold War security agenda, as new security threats were identified (Kaplan 1994) in a combination of Malthusian worries about environmental degradation and Hobbesian faith in the 'strong state'. While Malthusian doomsayers still occasionally make headlines (McLoughlin 2004), the debate between the optimists and pessimists has progressed significantly. As Allan (2001) has put it succinctly: the optimists are right but dangerous, the pessimists are wrong but useful. The debate has opened a more serious look into the connection between conflicts and scarcity. Intermediate factors between scarcity and violent conflict have been identified: society's social-institutional resource capital for regulating conflict.

While international water wars have yet to happen, *local* water disputes continue to break out. MSPs may be less than suitable in adversative cultures where social changes develop with clashes and jumps – 'litigation cultures' such as the United States or Chile – rather than gradual motion. In a traumatised post-violence society like Perú however, and in countries where states are eager to reach out to society like South Africa, the MSP approach as Alternative Dispute Resolution can be a breather, a novel option worth exploring. Both in terror-stricken Perú and anarchic Bolivia, where social trust is low, novel ways of local consensus-building and fine-tuning (*concertación*) are welcomed, as case studies by **María Teresa Oré** (Chapter 9) and **Nicolas Faysse** et al. (Chapter 11) in this volume underscore.

For many, the lack of harmony, incompatibility and struggle inherent in conflict continues to have a negative connotation. However, our research finds that MSPs are of necessity political and – especially at the start – often conflictive, as participants stake out their territories. 'Conflict' can range from disagreement to violent war – a word that has been diluted by excessive labelling of local disputes as 'water wars'. Both critical and cognitive schools, however, perceive conflict as essentially healthy, as it brings people's preferences out in the open. The situations we research are the result of a diversity of needs, interests, perceptions and cultures in the dealing with water resources. Such diversity should not necessarily result in a violent confrontation. Understanding conflict as a natural part of social life, within a framework of respect for difference, can be in fact an open window of opportunity for social change. Therefore conflict should be understood as something that is not negative or positive in itself and that will occur in every age, culture and space.[4]

4 Robert Wright (2000) argues conflict is ultimately positive, because a sufficient amount of conflict produces the necessary level of co-operation needed to survive as a human species.

Adaptive Management

While water wars may not be close at end, it does not change the fact that in many areas of the world, basins are closing, requiring a stressful process of reallocating water resources, necessitating an *adaptive* water redistribution process away from major guzzlers. This adaptation process brings social dilemmas, which Jiggins and Röling (2004) usefully define as the *unfeasibility or non-existence of an equitable distribution of a resource*. As Turton and Ohlsson (1999) note, scarcity can bring a reflective process, spawning social and environmental NGOs who demand greater influence in the decision-making process. MSPs can facilitate such n adaptive process in which actors face a changing environment, realise their common predicament and mutual interdependence in realising solutions and decide to take joint action (Röling 1994). If they see the interdependencies of their stakes in the shared resource, and agree to sit together to negotiate about pressing issues, they may develop the sense of ownership required to manage these issues, and through their collective action manage the common-pool resource in a more sustainable way (Steins and Edwards 1998).

Water management presents especially apt examples of the aforementioned social dilemmas. Just like public managers have learned to face up to the inevitable shortcomings in tackling all governance problems,[5] water managers are faced with the realization that you cannot eliminate all water risks. The 1990s have seen serious erosion on the claim to the engineerability, or even governability, of the socio-political system – most notably Beck's 'Risk society' (1986).

Ensuring and allocating sufficient water of acceptable quality for all, in the face of dwindling supply is a complex task indeed. A diversity of different uses and users compete for the same resource (Grigg 1997). Because of the complexity and uncertainty surrounding water management issues, they easily lead to value conflicts. This makes water (re)allocation issues 'wicked' (intractable) problems (van de Graaf and Hoppe 1992; Fischer 1995). A great many issues can easily be decided: they are straightforward and the evidence for and against is tidy, and people are clear on what they want. Not all water issues are straightforward, exactly because of the different social values people attach to them, not least in light of the resource's irreplaceability. The great number of recent controversies over water projects attests to the intractable nature of those water issues, and they are likely to be intensified as the realisation sinks in that an adaptive shift to 'demand management' implies tough socio-economic choices (Ohlsson 1998).

Stress is the difference between a challenge and coping capacity – to ease the stress, one either needs to reduce the stress or increase the capacity for coping, that is, tap as many capabilities as possible. Similarly, if governability is the ratio of challenges to capabilities (cf. Kooiman 1993) there are two sides to the equation. Not only can we seek to reduce challenges, we can also seek to enhance capabilities.

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5 In the discipline of Public Administration, a similar systemic approach became popular in the 1990s to cope with complexity in response to a sense of ungovernability of socio-political problems (e.g. Kooiman 1993). The 'limits to governability' are increasingly recognised.

Because the stakeholders represent different partial interests, a wider spectrum of water management issues at basin level will be covered. This may facilitate trade-offs, package deals and win-win situations that promote a more integrated approach than a single-issue platform would. Geldof (2004), for example, shows that in participatory replanning processes in urban areas solving non-water issues such as traffic congestion can help raise the visibility of water management and increase commitment to it. Bringing in a variety of actors, thus increasing *feedback* within the system, might help improve the quality of system governance, increasing the range of options, opening up a flexible repertoire.

Democratisation and Empowerment

> 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 (2nd World Water Forum in The Hague, March 2000).

MSPs are highly compatible with so-called DIPs (Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes) seek to 'democratise democracy', increasing the range of alternatives and scope of action by relying more on an argumentative turn (Bloomfield et al. 1998). The inclusion of disenfranchised groups and perspectives is pivotal in this process. MSPs represent a particular approach to democracy. By giving allocated seats to different groups rather than majority vote, and making room for extensive deliberation, the idea is to give voice to weaker or smaller interests that would otherwise be outvoted. 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 or the nine 'major groups' identified in the Rio Summit of 1992, it could also be relevant to include different ethnic, linguistic, cultural or age groups (Warner and Simpungwe 2003), while in South Asian *panchayats*, women are given a specific quota.

Edmunds and Wollenberg (2001) and Leroy (2002) have called attention to problems of inequality in platforms, which we shall highlight below. Action-oriented researchers however see it the other way round: unequal access to scarce resources is a key rationale for setting up platforms. They feel mobilising stakeholders can be an important factor in bringing about social change, wresting greater control over water resources from the hands of the powerful. Platforms can promote the emancipation of the previously powerless, the underprivileged, the disenfranchised. In such a case the MSP may start out as an alliance of multiple non-powerful actors seeking reform, co-opting the powers that be in the course of time.

A multi-stakeholder process may empower those participants who are equipped to negotiate and take advantage of their voice and of new information. But marginal groups may well be badly organised and easily co-opted or bribed. The poorest may not participate, because their opportunity costs are too steep. An especially serious problem occurs when marginalized stakeholders remain unheard and even stand to lose from the consultation process. Thus, participatory processes can actually *dis*empower groups (Edwards and Wollenberg 2001). As **Bruce Currie-Alder**

maintains in his contribution (Chapter 15), MSPs for participatory natural resource management (e.g. Christie et al. 2000) can in fact degenerate into a mechanism for resource capture if responsibilities are not truly shared. In conflictive settings, what may look like consociational arrangements may in fact be hegemonic control on the part of a state or social elite (Lustic 1997). As noted by Faysse et al in this book, to enable change, empowerment may well be needed outside as much as inside the MSP context.

An inventory what MSPs should do turns out to be all things to all people:

- Conflict resolution — Prevent violence
- Adaptive water management — Prevent environmental degradation
- Democratization and empowerment — Equity

Yet, MSPs for Integrated Catchment Management do not necessarily serve all three sets of goals. The best result for sustainable resource management and integrated management does not necessarily have the best social outcome given existing power differences. Conversely, when many actors bring their strategies and power positions to bear, to bend the outcome in their direction, the outcome may be a monster and water management may deteriorate rather than improve. As the Africans say, it does not matter to the grass whether elephants fight or mate on it – it suffers anyway. The gain will then be political (the prevention of violent conflict) rather than serve environmental or social goals.

For a New Governance Deal

Deflating expectations may be needed not just to prevent disappointment on the part of the stakeholders, but also on behalf of the donors and sponsors – especially now that multi-stakeholder participation is well on its way to becoming a conditionality. In part in response to successful NGO protests against interventions such as the construction of large dams and extensive flood protection schemes – skilfully playing the international media and embarrassing donors. The World Bank, ADB and IADB's policies now routinely call for participatory processes, and are nudging closer to requiring participation as a conditionality for new loans, as exemplified by the grudging creation of the CONIAG national roundtable after the Cochabamba war (Warner 2004)

The interest of multilateral donor institutions in participation is part of their emphasis on 'good governance' thinking (World Bank 2000). The rediscovery of civil society replaces state-led and market-led models which, on their own, fail at providing adequate water management. This integrates civil society in a new, more complex governance arrangement of public, private and civil-society governance (Kooiman 1993), widening the range of options in dealing with water issues (Warner 2002). 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. In this context, Lankford and Hepworth (2006), among others, advocates a distributed, decentralised rather than top-down mode of basin governance.

Multi-Stakeholder Platforms for Integrated Water Resource Management and at catchment level seeks to accommodate the complexity of uses, the diversity of users and the dynamics of uncertainty and change:

Challenge/Opportunity	The 3 'u's	Goal
Complexity of	*U*ses	IWRM
Diversity of	*U*sers	Multi-Stakeholder Participation
Dynamics due to	*U*ncertainty and change	Adaptive Management

In terms of Kooiman (1993, 1997), the governance challenges are *complexity, diversity and dynamics*: present-day resource management throws up complexity of uses and linkages, a diversity of actions, a dynamic physical and policy environment creating uncertainty. These are played out in different modalities of governance: top-down intervention, comanagement (network management) and self-governance.

Creative governance (Kooiman 2000) is, in this context, the way these modalities are crafted together tapping the strength of each, in response to the failure of government-only or market-only approaches. Even where formal government has broken down, hitherto unrecognised systems are in place that achieve remarkable feats – as Long stresses (2001), social actors continuously participate in altering their social context, whether or not they are invited to do so in a bounded context. Norman Uphoff (1992) and Elinor Ostrom (1990) found impressive examples of participatory *self-organisation* in resource management. Evidence from many different contexts has shown that stakeholders are perfectly capable of working together in regulating access to, allocation of and control over resources (Ostrom 1990).

This rediscovery of civil society also cross-links with the New Public Management (Osbourne 1992) which promoted the introduction of business management tools in the running of public sector, shedding public functions. This not only recast government as an enterprise, but also the citizen as a calculating, critical, savvy client judging the public sector by its outputs. The client however is increasingly expected to take co-responsibility for resource management in a new governance arrangement. The government still tends to be the leading actor, though – it is not always decisive enough in assuming that leadership.

Unpacking MSPs

What *is* a multi-stakeholder platform? Let us unpack the three constitutive elements of the compound; 'multi', 'stakeholder' and 'platform:

Stakeholder... The word '*stakeholder*' itself is of recent vintage. In issues of corporate governance, it is increasingly realised that apart from the (often short-term) interests of shareholders, other interests such as employees, suppliers, the community and the environment should be taken into account if the company is to

be legitimate and sustainable (sources). Anthony Giddens coined the 'stakeholder society' as a ('Third') way of extending this concept to the way that nations should be governed. Society is thus represented as an enterprise, with all the risk-taking, profit and loss that involves, rather than a secure living environment.

Stakeholders are individuals, groups or institutions that are concerned with, or have an interest in the water resources and their management (World Bank 2003). They include all those who affect and/or are affected by the policies, decisions, and actions of the system (Grimble et al. 1995). That means not only direct water users but those affected by (waste)water management. They include those involved in water resource development, management and planning, including public-sector agencies, private-sector organisations and NGOs and external (such as donor) agencies.

Multi... The '*multi*' in MSP does not refer to 'multiple stakes' but to the diversity of identities of stakeholders. The 'multi', then, is contrasted with 'single-sector' forms of interaction as practised in, e.g., Participatory Irrigation Management (PIM). PIM is nominally concerned with agriculture, not with fisheries, industry, navigation or urban water uses – although PIM may indeed seek to represent different interest within *agriculture* – high-, mid- and lowland farmers, or smallholders and latifundists – or allocate special voice to the traditionally disenfranchised such as landless or women.

Stakeholders still tend to be solely defined in terms of economic identity groups while it would make sense to assign stakeholdership to cultural, religious or other identities, where these identities are salient, in the tradition of consociationalism (Lijphart 1971). Unrepresented interests may also find their way through co-opting formally sanctioned identities where the platform's bye-laws provide strict barriers to (later) entry. For example, barriers to entry to the executive boards of Dutch *waterschappen* are high – it would take a statutory change to allow a seat for a new stakeholder group – which forces environmental groups to co-opt one of the incumbent stakeholder groups. But barriers may be more subtle: as Warner and Simpungwe (2003) have noted on the basis of Simpungwe's experience with South African MSPs that platforms are unlikely to remain captivating to the rural poor when the meetings are held in urban block offices with lots of people in suits toting laptops, or when the local language is not understood. Physical and cultural accessibility of the participatory process is therefore graded.

In terms of number, to deserve the 'multi' prefix, we would expect more than two, three interests to be represented in the platform. We would also expect different levels to be represented (e.g. local government and state government) as both impact on the catchment's management, at the strategic and operational level. A rough measure of the 'multi'-inclusiveness of MSPs is whether state, civil-society and private-sector actors at several levels are represented. However, if this means that three minority interests at three levels getting together equals an MSP, perhaps we are on the wrong track. We have to look at actor relevance and roles within the network comprising MSPs as well.

Role descriptions such as proposed by Moench et al. (2000) can be useful in this respect. Moench et al. distinguish 'managers' from 'auditors' who, as they rarely hold a great direct stake in the resource itself, can facilitate or support bargaining

between user interests. Likewise, Gavin and Pinder (1995) identify primary and secondary stakeholders. Primary stakeholders are those who are ultimately affected, i.e. who expect to benefit from or be adversely affected by the intervention; secondary stakeholders: those with some intermediary role. Note however that even with the best of intentions, it may not be possible for the facilitator to avoid powerplay due to structural power differences, i.e. 'level the playing field'.

Platform... Finally, a '*platform*' is a forum for negotiation. The word 'platform' suggests that this joint action takes place on a raised but level playing field. *Raised*, to be able to step out of sectoral issues and take a broader overview of the issues, while the raised surface also connotes the conspicuous nature of MSPs, which act in the public space and are therefore open to public scrutiny. *Level*, in the sense that the stakeholders (ideally) have (or come to a situation of) equal rights and power balance (Den Hond 2003). The assumption of a level playing field is one of the most conspicuous flaws in MSP thinking given the obvious power gaps, or indeed politics, between the participating actors (Edmunds and Wollenberg 2001).

Participation and Politics

Power Sharing for Real?

The present book involves many cases which explicitly take the political aspect into account – within the platform and in its broader environment. Since water policy in most countries is primarily in the hands of the state and mostly the initiator of a water forum is the public sector, the level of participation in fact denotes the level of power sharing (Bruns 2003).

One important political reality is that states do not much like sharing power. For all the sea changes in public management in response to state overload and policy failures – working with societal actors, network management in which the state is a *primus inter paris* – many states are still not relinquishing much of their power primacy.

Governments have certain exclusive resources at their disposal: sizeable budgets and personnel, special powers, access to the mass media, a monopoly on the use of force and democratic legitimation. Access to these resources generally means that governments have considerable power in particular to define the strategic space of any other actor.

'Real participation' requires devolving mandates down to the lowest practicable level (cf. the Dublin Principles of 1992) and giving people the right to say 'no' to interventions – even if they make perfect sense technically, economically and environmentally. Rather than preparing for the possibility of a 'no', agencies often prefer a controlled participatory processes that seeks to change people's minds about a controversial issue – in other words, the initiators take a 'selling approach' to participation, hearing 'participation' as the magic word that will 'create' a support base for acceptance of new policies and interventions such as water pricing. as tends to be the rationale for basin committees in Brazil (Brannstrom 2004; Mostertman

2005) and new infrastructure such as dams in Gujarat and Maharashtra, India (Rajput 2002). While opponents may be vocal about the consequences of the intervention, they are not fundamentally opposed to the principle, and did not feel it worth their while to frustrate the process. However if the initiating party seeks to keep control of the process, while offloading some of the less desired tasks, such 'selling' is unlikely to be effective. Bangladesh is a striking example of a state that is very happy to devolve (offload) responsibility for the operation and maintenance of decrepit water infrastructure onto users themselves, who by taking charge of operation and maintenance are expected to develop a sense of ownership. However, the latter have no choice in the matter, or on the budget.

As a form of communicative governance – learning together – MSPs can increase understanding and acceptance of new ideas and policies. But communication experts will tell you that you cannot change people's attitudes and behaviour if they are fundamentally unhappy with the policy (e.g. Aarts and van Woerkum 2000). You cannot 'sell' an unpopular plan. If the starting point cannot be subject to discussion, strong opponents will question the legitimacy of the process itself (second-order conflict).

Rather more successful MSP processes are especially found in planning and visioning processes, convocated by the government, where plans for the future may be at a less detailed stage, with a discrete number of sessions and enough room for adaptation of plans.

The philosophy of Multi-Stakeholder Platforms has deep roots in the Dutch culture of consensus seeking, emphasising the need to involve minorities. That is not so surprising giving its history of accommodating interests in deeply divided society by way of 'poldering' between farmers and 'consociationalism' between elites. (Lijphart 1971; Warner and Simpungwe 2003). But Jiggins, Röling and van Slobbe's work (2002, also Jiggins and Röling 2004) flags some important pitfalls of Dutch 'poldering': formal platforms with official stakeholders can lead to endless discussion, especially where participants have conflicting compensation structures. Moreover, consensus seeking may not fit every situation or culture. Seeking general consensus, to prevent surprises, means that the game may draw on forever. The Dutch experience is like a supertanker. Goals may change in response to the feedbacks during the process. The representatives may start to bond with their negotiation partners and lose touch with their constituency, which may disown them or their results at the negotiation table. In Holland, environmental groups that were heavily involved in so-called ROM projects (Glasbergen 1995) have sometimes pulled out for this reason.

In many instances of top-down MSPs, the government as network manager presents itself as facilitator and/or secretary, seeking to co-opt all stakeholders. In South Africa the state seems quite willing to leave more political space to citizens. The joint role of initiator and facilitator however has its drawbacks, as **Eliab Simpungwe, Bert Raven and Pieter Waalewijn** (Chapter 12) show in their South African case. The role conflict of a government seeking to keep water management governable clashes with the neutrality and leadership required of a facilitator.

To devolve more power to society, you need both a willing government and an active, well-developed civil society. This is not a universal given. **Kai Wegerich**

(Chapter 14) makes a convincing argument why MSP-type dialogues are unlikely to even emerge in Uzbekistan. By the example of the province of Khorezm, Wegerich shows that since independence, the state's influence on decision making over water allocation has grown rather than been reduced, while civil society is highly underdeveloped. A new comanagement arrangement is not so likely in such circumstances.

Managing the Catchment Level: Is There a Catch?

The importance of integrated water management at catchment level is now almost a truism in water policy circles. The underlying idea is that water is so fundamental to life that we should live our lives in harmony with these natural boundaries (Franks 2004). Integrated Catchment Management in this way provides us with a beacon, as well as a well-delimited focus for research. Our concern with MSPs for Integrated Catchment Management is inspired by the European Water Framework Directive of 2000 (Directive no. 200/60/EG), which postulates the need for integrated water management, with due stakeholder participation, with the catchment as the defining unit. River basins are the management units, their management should involve surface, ground- and wastewater and to the extent that they are transboundary the European member states have to cooperate in the management of such river basin areas. Since river basins do not respect administrative boundaries, we can expect many bigger and smaller transboundary MSPs in Europe in the years to come.

A famous example, often hailed as a success, is the Lerma-Chapala river basin council, which covers a host of stakeholder groups including multiple Mexican states. **Philippus Wester, Jaime Hoogesteger van Dijk and Hans Paters** (Chapter 10) however note that in the eyes of many the river basin council has led to more conflicts rather than to conflict resolution. They argue that the continued involvement of the federal government is both a key to the longevity and to the weakness of this MSP.

While the Lerma-Chapala RBC seeks to accommodate different states within a federal context, collaboration across sovereign countries is even harder. Indeed, at the international level, international water conflicts are the headline-grabbing focus of water management at catchment level. Wolf (1995) showed that international water treaties far outnumber violent disputes, yet the substance of these treaties leaves much to be desired. Even commissions regulating international rivers shared by friendly states often cooperate as little as possible. In this context, the space for stakeholder involvement in transboundary stakeholder platforms seems an uphill battle.

Devolving power to lower-level actors is hard enough for states, delegating power to trans- and international actors proves out to be even harder. Sovereignty is sacrosanct both with respect to societal actors and other nations. However, on special occasions a multi-stakeholder dialogue can be an interesting 'Track Two' activity.[6]

6 The term 'Track Two' refers to informal, unofficial interaction outside the formal governmental power structure, providing the means for historically conflicting groups to improve communication and gain a better understanding of each other's point of view. In so

Some Track-Two partnerships were in fact concluded or formulated during the 2002 World Summit in Johannesburg, which explicitly promoted voluntary partnerships. **Leo Santbergen's** study of the Zwin Commission (Chapter 7) is emblematic of both the usefulness and rarity of Track Two processes – like a may fly, the Commission only showed in exceptional political 'weather conditions', not so much to solve but to take the pressure off a policy crisis.

Going beyond Track-Two, MSP processes can be relevant at multiple levels of social interaction as **John Dore** (Chapter 13) shows in his chapter on multi-stakeholder initiatives in the Mekong. They give examples of opportunities and realities of MSPs on four separate Tracks known in international informal diplomacy. Next to official Mekong River Commission processes, he sees the potential of MSPs in Track-Two, Track-Three and even Track-Four processes, with promising initiatives but daunting, formidable political realities.

Results Needed...

This book approaches MSPs as a multi-legged beast, often mentioned in tales, but as yet rarely spotted in broad daylight. Our research is about why these platforms in water management are promoted, whether they indeed emerge and how they are functioning. MSPs do not solve problems in themselves, and are not going to function in any context, for any problem.

The water MSP case studies from around the world show achievements and limitations of the concept. As noted above, not all 'habitats' are conducive for the beasts to thrive in. We have attempted to frame the analysis by developing a set of assessment indicators, introduced in Chapter 2, organised by the Mitchellian triad of process, context and outcome. The contributions by Dore, Faysse and Currie-Alder provide relevant 'MSP desirables' that we draw on as we evaluate the utility of our own indicators in the Conclusion, which also provides a questionnaire for MSP evaluation. In our concluding chapter (Chapter 16) these are tied together in a 'mixed model' of fighting and learning.

The examples, while illustrative rather than exhaustive, show that while MSPs are an exciting and popular idea, they are not a panacea. According to van der Veen (2004) there are three ways of arriving at an outcome: force (the prerogative of the state), trade (the market) and deliberation (civil society). Currently, dialogue is enthusiastically embraced in the water world. But is anyone listening? Without a mandate, there is no obligation to do anything with the outcome of all the talk. Without an audience, MSPs are dialogues of the deaf, and if too many fruitless MSP processes are being set up, MSPs as a new institutional species may well join the ranks of the red herring, the paper tiger, the dodo and the white elephant.

One the first amendments the MSP-ICM research group made to the working definition of MSPs was therefore to include an action component, to avoid the danger of MSP turning into a talking shop (although we qualified this later, see

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doing, it reduces anger, fear or tension, and facilitates the resolution of substantive conflicts. (http://ccrweb.ccr.uct.ac.za/archive/two)

the Conclusions chapter of the present volume). Management books on innovation suggest you need quick wins to carry the revolution through. For its participants not to lose interest MSPs need to produce 'food on the table'. The saying can be taken quite literally for the poor – to the hungry man, 'the beauty of the beast is in the pot'.[7]

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