



DELTA IN TIMES OF CLIMATE CHANGE II

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE, SCIENCE, CITIES AND BUSINESS
 ROTTERDAM THE NETHERLANDS, 24-26 SEPTEMBER 2014

Deltas in Practice, policy-practice sessions	
Deltas in Practice Theme 6. Awareness, capacity building and community resilience	
DP 6.1 Resilient adaptation: how to practice what is preached	
Chair	MSc Kim Anema, Unesco-IHE and Netherlands Red Cross, the Netherlands
Organised by	MSc Kim Anema, Unesco-IHE and Netherlands Red Cross, the Netherlands
Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beth McLachlan, City of Melbourne, Australia • Erwin Meijboom, Regional Water Authority Delfland, the Netherlands • Cathal O'Donovan, Skibbereen Floods Committee, Ireland
Session topic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support and understanding of climate adaptation strategies and measures from the perspective of communities
Objective of the session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate change is a global issue, but affects local communities. What do global climate projections mean for local adaptation strategies and measures? How do the larger time and space scales of scientific knowledge translate to the urgency for communities to act 'here and now'? This session aims to identify the crucial elements and actions for creating a community that is inherently resilient.
Main conclusions and lessons learnt from the panel discussion	
<p>Cathal O'Donovan: Our Skibberdeen community lives in a tidal floodplain and has experienced more intensive rain over the past decades. We cannot ignore the risks. We organised ourselves 20 years ago and decided to be resilient. It works: authorities are listening to us, but we have to continuously knock on their door, or else they forget about us. It has become much easier to interact with state agents than 30 years ago. The increased receptiveness of the state is a great improvement.</p> <p>Beth McLachlan: In Melbourne flooding is not the main problem; heat and drought are. There is no 'flood memory', which makes it hard to involve the community in this topic, whereas they are engaged in heat and drought problems. Combining the conversations on heat, drought, and flooding is necessary in order to get attention to flooding. And it leads to better, integral solutions, because retained water after heavy rainfall can be used during droughts. The municipality communicates to the communities that the government is not going to prevent all disasters, but that living in a flood prone area implies that one needs to be prepared for floods. This alone does not motivate people to take action though; through social research we try to find out what factors determine people's willingness to act.</p> <p>Erwin Meijboom: The water board reserved a lot of money to invest in water storage and discharge measures. These were difficult to implement without engagement of companies and individuals, since they possess a large part of the land needed. Involving the community clearly yielded results: they came up with surprisingly effective and cheap flood prevention measures that the water board had not even thought of, saving millions of euros. A model that simulates flooding resulting from heavy rainfall 3-dimensionally turned out to be a strong communication tool.</p>	
Main conclusions from the discussion with the audience	
<p>Communities focus on problems that are already happening. Climate change is too far away, and predictions too difficult to obtain for local situations (not reliable because of microclimates). Therefore they do not really work with predictions on climate change; they assume things will get</p>	





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worse than they already are, just adding to the urgency of the need to act now. For state authorities climate change is part of risk management and decision making processes. The different relations between experts and the public have changed in time. Communities consider the authorities to be the experts and solve their problems. At the same time, communities' perception of the problem sometimes leads to solutions that are more cost-effective than those devised by the authorities.

Strategies for informing and involving the public include: social media; education; translations of experts' information into laymen's words; forums, blogs, surveys, websites; and social research to find out what the level of knowledge and the level of preparedness for disasters is. It is important to be active on social media to engage in the conversation. The Regional Water Authority Delfland specifically focuses on the youth for education and tries to integrate educational aspects in concrete projects.

It is difficult to find a new balance between responsibilities of the government and individuals. Authorities find it hard to give up control and their assessment frameworks often inhibit approval of innovative solutions that individuals propose.

Main result or conclusion of the session

Communities are dealing with the problems of extreme weather, whether or not this is caused by climate change. The historic relationship between government and society is changing, as is the value of water; responsibilities as well as costs and benefits are shifting. Engaging communities is one of the key challenges in climate adaptation, but also one of the key solutions. Knowledge about climate change projections is important, but for the implementation of measures community commitment is too; that cannot be won by communicating models or projections. New communication tools, like social media, allow authorities to engage with individuals directly.

Most exciting insights or outcome of the session

- Communities need to activate themselves, not wait and complain.
- As it is the citizens who are ultimately affected by climate change, it is only logical that they should be part of the solution.
- People don't understand uncertainties they cannot handle psychologically (e.g. 1/10.000 chance), not even experts – then how can we expect the general public to understand?
- When you are not looking at challenges in isolation anymore, but in an integrated way, you cannot always achieve the optimal solution for one issue, but you will find the best solution over the whole range of issues taken together.
- Local knowledge is as important as expert knowledge; without both, knowledge is incomplete. Information provided by experts should always be looked at in the context of the local community.

