

Water driven rural development in the Baltic Sea Region” Nr.  
R094 WATERDRIVE

# Leadership Manual

Building trust in cross-sector  
local water management

WP 2

Version

11/03/2021



**Project “Water driven rural development in the Baltic Sea Region” Nr. R094 WATERDRIVE is co-financed by Interreg Baltic Sea Region Programme**

Document type	Report
Title	Leadership Manual – buidling trust in cross-sector local water management
Author	Magnus Ljung
Organizations	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Front cover photo	Freepik.com

## Project Partners

Sweden	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Sweden	South Baltic Water District Authority/Kalmar County Administrative Board
Sweden	Swedish Board of Agriculture
Sweden	Västervik Municipality
Lithuania	Baltic Environmental Forum Lithuania
Finland	Natural Resources Institute Finland
Finland	Finnish Environment Institute
Finland	ProAgria Southern Finland
Finland	Finnish Field Drainage Association
Estonia	Stockholm Environment Institute Tallinn Centre
Latvia	Jelgava Local Municipality
Latvia	Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies
Latvia	Union Farmers’ Parliament
Poland	Agricultural Advisory Service in Brwinow
Poland	European Regional Centre for Ecohydrology
Poland	PhenoHorizon OLP SP. zO.O.
Germany	Agency for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs of the German Federal State Schleswig Holstein
Denmark	L&F SEGES
Russia	Northwest Research Institute of Agricultural Economics and Organisation (NWRIAEO)
Russia	Institute for Engineering and Environmental Problems in Agricultural Production – branch of Federal State Budgetary Scientific Institution “Federal Scientific Agroengineering Center VIM (IEEP)
Russia	Administration of Guryevsk city district



## Contents

Contents .....	3
Executive Summary .....	4
Introduction .....	5
On leadership in water management .....	6
Local and regional leadership .....	7
Collaborative leadership .....	8
Process facilitation .....	10
The participatory toolbox and leadership .....	11
Guiding principles and values .....	12
Accepting complexity and multiperspectivity .....	12
Systemic thinking and action .....	13
Support learning through participation .....	13
Making progress .....	14
To facilitate and design open processes .....	14
The progress triangle .....	15
Communicative competence .....	16
Pedagogical competence – knowing when to do what and why .....	16
Making strategic decisions in process design .....	17
Management .....	18
Managing different phases by process design .....	18
Ensure enabling external preconditions .....	19
Organise relevant internal structures .....	21
Implement new ways of working together – link to the participatory toolbox .....	22
Learn from experience by implementing evaluation tools .....	24
Broadening the perspective .....	26
Leadership from a systemic and holistic perspective .....	26
Concluding remarks .....	27
References .....	28

## Executive Summary

Local and regional leaders have a core function in integrated water management. Among other things, they initiate and plan the work, organise and facilitate activities, and enable access to relevant knowledge sources. To transform the way we work with water issues and to implement cross-sector collaborations one has to accept and manage the complexity of socio-ecological systems. Who is to accept such a challenge? No doubt, leadership is necessary for things to happen. The questions are how to think about this, how to do it and what functions are involved in a successful leadership.

The Leadership Manual aim to inspire, motivate and strengthen capacities among existing and potential leaders. It builds on experience from work in the Waterdrive case areas as well as other projects where stakeholders jointly have succeeded in implementing sustainability measures. It includes identification of different forms of leadership, core principles to follow, methods how to work with multiple perspectives in a targeted way, how to benefit from multiple perspectives in a strategic way, and questions to ask yourself in order to make conscious choices.

This manual makes a distinction between three levels of leadership; the policy-oriented and administrative level, the collaborative level, and process facilitation. All three dimensions are important, but implies different competencies and roles. Leadership thus have different meanings and functions within cross-sector water management. Nonetheless, one has to relate to some universal guiding principles regardless leadership. Accepting complexity, managing multiperspectivity, acting systemic, and learning by doing is some of these.

A core competence is in process design, consciously deciding on the approach, applied methods and tools. There is no process design that fits all situations. Regional and local adaptation is part of the skill. What is in common is rather the questions one always has to ask oneself. These are listed in this manual, for leaders to reflect upon and discuss with stakeholders.

The Leadership Manual ends by summarizing success factors that are important to manage. As a leader you have the responsibility to make sure that such factors are elaborated although the preconditions for the work seldom will be as good as hoped. It is about having trust in people’s ability to contribute and to learn, as well as your own skills to manage the social processes that are being initiated. The hope is that this manual will give both inspiration and confidence when taking the next step in how we work with complex natural resource issues in the future.

Remember, it is from the experience we make that we will improve the way we work and find a successful approach in the end. Do not hesitate – get started and learn while muddling through.

## Introduction

Local authorities and communities, spatial planners, water and land-use managers are to implement water and river basin management measures in an integrated, targeted and cost-efficient way. To be able to do this locally as well as across geographical scales there is a need for an increased awareness and knowledge about, but also adherence to guiding principles and timely implementation of participatory tools. Both research and policy has understood that sustainable and integrated water management are the emergent property of a successful interaction between social and ecological systems. That is, desirable water properties arise out of the site-specific learning and action among and between stakeholders (sharing problem definitions and monitoring, negotiation, conflict resolution, agreement, creating and maintaining public goods, concertation of action). In such situations, the centralised policy provides a context for dynamic and decentralised processes, and, in the case of watersheds, for concerted and local actions across the Baltic Sea region. Local and regional leaders have a crucial role to initiate and support such work. Consequently, there is a demand for an increased capacity and new management skills in order to implement new practices in water management and its many contexts. This will be the responsibility for the regional and collaborative leadership.

As for water that flows across borders, many different stakeholders are involved in integrated water management, although having diverse interests, mandate and or relationships to the specific context. Collaborative work is essential for success. A lack of cross-sector cooperation is therefore one of the most important bottlenecks for managing the multiple problems that faces water management today. As leaders are the ones to initiate and maintain the necessary cooperation, there is no doubt that leadership, in a local context, is both necessary but also challenging. It involves not only administrative and technical skills, but is also very much about building trust, to facilitate and coordinate. In addition, there are no quick fix or pre-defined method to implement, why guidelines or manuals for local and regional leaders by necessity must be negotiated and locally adapted. Some tools will not be relevant for some. Nevertheless, some core questions must leaders always ask themselves. The answers will differ depending on context and to the situation at hand, but the questions must be asked and discussed.

*This Leadership Manual aim to inspire, motivate and strengthen capacities among established and potential leaders, supporting them to lead cross-sector water management initiatives.* It builds on experience from work in the Waterdrive case areas as well as other projects where farmers/landowners and the municipality jointly have succeeded in implementing natural resource, land use and climate measures. It includes identification of different forms of leadership, core principles to follow, methods how to work with multiple perspectives in a targeted way, how to benefit from multiple perspectives in a strategic way, and questions to ask yourself in order to make conscious choices.

The leadership manual cover issues like important preconditions, how to manage different phases and aspects of integrated water management, as well as identified success factors. In connection to this manual, one might read the participatory toolbox developed within the Waterdrive-project. The practical use of specific tools is not part of this manual. This report start with some perspectives on leadership in natural resource management, and continues with an overview of important guiding principles, values and attitudes. Thereafter the focus is on management issues, especially process design and how demands on leadership change as the work evolves. The manual ends by giving some recommendations for future work.

## On leadership in water management

Social science research has clearly shown that problems of collective action in natural resource and water management situations more easily come about when there is a large amount of social capital, which builds the trust necessary for contingent behaviours to develop, and which eases the coming together of different stakeholders for development of joint solutions. Such preconditions does not always exist, they must be created, and the ones to initiate such a process are the formal or informal leaders. That is, although we might know what is needed to be successful, in practice it is a challenge that has to be concurred in each unique situation.

A concept that is becoming increasingly widespread in natural resource and water management context is *social learning*. It presupposes that certain basic social processes take place or are made conscious.

Social learning involves:

- Creation of arenas or new forum for interaction, learning and decision-making,
- Interactive policy development and goal formulation, which requires an ability to handle negotiation situations, conflicts, agreements, etc.
- Joint learning in order to create a common description of reality and a shared vision for the future.
- Process management and creation of the necessary conditions to move from good ambitions to concrete actions.
- Ability to identify conflicts between new goals and measures, and existing structures (in society), behaviours (among people) or environmental states (in nature).

To initiate and lead a social learning process involves the ability to, through stakeholder interaction, construct shared knowledge, to agree to act, and to monitor effects of acting upon that knowledge. Furthermore, social learning involves both the knowledge for the adaptive management of the bio-physical environment, as well as the knowledge needed for the participatory management of social processes. It takes place in the interface between people and their environment.

In practice leadership in water management involves the ability to operate in (inter)national, regional and local policy context, on different geographical scales, involving a broad range of stakeholders, and being able to use relevant methods and tools to enable communication, learning and action. In order to create some structure in these challenging tasks at least three distinct aspects of leadership can be applied; local and regional leadership vs. collaborative leadership. In addition, it is important to clarify the specific role of leaders as process facilitators, and that the participatory toolbox will be used differently depending on what aspect of leadership we talk about (figure 1). These dimensions will be elaborated below.



Figure 1. There are different aspects of leadership at play in water driven rural development, covering more administrative functions to the practical use of different participatory tools.

### Local and regional leadership

Most decision-making processes in natural resource management starts with a perceived problem, for instance decreasing water quality, loss of biodiversity or risk for flooding. These situations are often characterised by high complexity. In such a situation, someone must take the initiative to change the negative development. This might be the local or regional leader.

A local and regional leader can belong to different organisations. It could be an authority, a municipality, a NGO, any other association or a private firm such as an advisory organisation. What is important is that the leader has the legitimacy and the capacity to lead the work initially. This is one reason for that many of these processes are initiated by public organisations, that is, due to resource availability.

Leaders such as community leaders, agency field staff, engaged citizens, landowners, and elected officials can all play a leadership role in integrated water management processes and contribute to progress. Initially there is often a lack of resources, political support, or agency direction. An important task for such leaders is to mobilize enough resources making collaborative, innovative and action-oriented work possible.

Such leaders are change agents, whom foster trust and motivate stakeholder to get involved and support the work. They display such roles as “*cheerleader-energizer, diplomat, process facilitator, leader, convenor, catalyst, and promoter*” (Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000, p. 178).

It is important to move beyond a leadership characterised by control and command. At the same time, it is not only about making stakeholders involved and learn together. Such initiatives might be stimulating to engage in, but seldom lead to real change. Local and regional leadership in integrated water management involves a skill to balance between *structural issues*, such as legal frameworks, policy contexts and institutions, and *process issues*, such as enabling communication, learning and

communication. Initially a core skill is that of the administrator. Local and regional leadership always involves a pre-phase where one has to argue for a will to work in new ways, for instance towards policy makers or existing and often traditional institutions. This can take a long time, but is still an important task. It is about establishing good enough preconditions for the future and more collaborative work.

Administrative leadership is present in most natural resource management situations, and is also known as bureaucratic leadership. This is a leadership style often associated with public organizations. Administrative leaders emphasize measurable outcomes and effectiveness, value decisions guided by data, and establish and support formal rules for work tasks and for decision procedures, similar to project management. The importance of administrative leadership in natural resource management should not be underestimated, while this might be the main role of many local or regional leaders. Making sure that organisational routines function, and that one follow existing rules. This also implies that someone else might take the more process and learning oriented role when collaboration start.

It is clear that the complexity of water management issues makes control and command leadership obsolete and administrative leadership important, but not enough. Campbell (1995) writes: *“Getting serious about sustainability means grappling with large and unfamiliar scales in space and time; technical uncertainties and risk; a multiplicity of stakeholders with diverse values and interests; an intricate interdependency of economic, social, and environmental issues; and situations in which decisions are often urgent and stakes high. One has only to attempt to answer these simple questions – Sustain what? Over what area? For how long? For the benefit of whom? Measured by what criteria? – to appreciate that sustainability can never be precisely defined”* (p. 125). These are all open questions, where the answers will differ from case to case. To make progress in such situations participatory and integrated approaches to water management also demand collaborative leadership and process facilitation.

### Collaborative leadership

As quickly as other people meet and interact social processes starts. As a leader, you have to take care of people and their interaction, as much as the subject issues in focus. Managing people involves specific competencies, adding to the administrative and strategic competencies described earlier. In processes where different stakeholders are to be involved and to manage a shared problem, one has to build on their experiences and knowledge as much as external inputs. By doing so you become an intermediary between external context and internal processes. Leadership is, in such situations, essentially about communication, to enable learning, and to coordinate joint actions. It is essential about implementing an interactive and relational approach to natural resource management. The core is collaboration and cooperation that will be elaborated in more detail below.

Collaboration emphasises the importance of *social learning*. The assumption is that stakeholders are intelligent, responsible agents who are willing to act in the collective interest. A precondition is they feel trust in the work approach as well as in the leaders guiding the work. In addition, stakeholders must form relevant *platforms* for decision-making and action. This is very much about working on, what the stakeholders as well as the issues at hand would label as “the right scale” and “the relevant problem”. Some sustainability problems might be solved on watershed level, other needs to be managed across landscapes. Similarly, stakeholder involvement is often related to scale, where commitment, sense of self in place (identity), and capacity to act, all is related to geographical and cultural scale. The possibility

for communication, social learning and concerted action among stakeholders must be created at the right scale. Finally, the interactive approach must be able to impact policy. It is based on *communicative reasoning* and rationality. That is, the way we communicate will define what learning that takes place and thus how innovative and feasible the outcomes will be. Such leadership approach is essentially collaborative.

The role of *collaborative leadership* is to engage others by designing constructive processes for working together, convene appropriate stakeholders, and facilitate and sustain their interaction. Already in 1994 Chrislip and Larson clarified that collaborative leadership is a “*different kind of leadership*” through which leaders: “*promote and safeguard the collaborative process rather than take unilateral, decisive action. The power of position is of little help in this world of peers, nor are the traditional hierarchical, political, and confrontational models of leadership. Those who lead collaborative efforts – transforming, facilitative, “servant” leaders -- rely on both a new vision of leadership and new skills and behaviors to help communities and organizations realize their visions, solve problems, and get results.*” (p. 127)

According to Stanford Social Innovation Review (Smith & Becker, 2018), nine sets of skills are central to collaborative leadership. These skills are grouped in three broad areas: a) building teams, b) solving problems, and c) achieving impact (figure 2). Such skills become more important the more complex processes we are to manage.

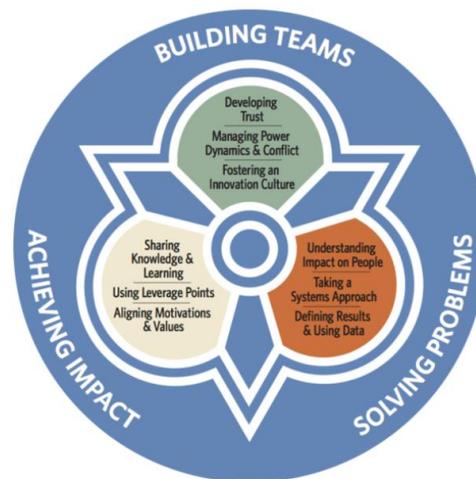


Figure 2. Nine set of skills that are critical for cross sector leaders to shape collaborations and drive impact (Smith & Becker, 2018)

Establishing strong teams start already when making first contact with core stakeholder, and involves issues of trust building and from the very beginning to foster a culture of collaborative learning. Solving problems rely on the group’s ability to take a systems approach, make use of best available knowledge, and take consequences of potential actions into account. Achieving impact is dependent on values, motivations and learning, but also timing, identifying and using the leverage points that emerge along the way.

### Process facilitation

If establishing new platforms for communication, learning and joint action is the core of collaborative leadership, process facilitation is about designing and leading the concrete activities and work on these platforms and together with stakeholders. To take the role as a process facilitator means managing people, situations, and issues in real time situations. You have to act, you have to take risks, and you have to live with the consequences of each action made. Of course, you are not alone, but you are the one responsible for making good ambitions materialised in people’s interaction.

Process facilitation is the art of creating best possible preconditions for learning and action in situation characterised by complexity and uncertainty. A skilled facilitator is most of all a good communicator and pedagogue. A person who support others to make progress towards shared goals. The situations could vary – from smaller working group meetings to multi-stakeholder partnership meetings, but it is always about managing people and making progress.

The process facilitator is pedagogically responsible in collaborative processes. This means that the facilitator is the one who will propose and implement designs, methods and tools that enable participation and lead to desirable and feasible results. The responsibility for implementing the outputs or being responsible for specific subject knowledge is shared among participants, but being able to answer the question "why do we do what we do and set up this activity in this way?" lies always by the process facilitator.

The process facilitator is also responsible for the workflow. As part of this, the facilitator must be able to:

- Describe the context that will frame or guide the collaborative work.
- Create clarity with regard to values, vision, process design, and the group’s mandate and area of responsibility.
- By one’s own actions, build trust and confidence between the participants and toward yourself.
- Enable synergies (win-win solutions) by being able to capture windows of opportunities.
- See participants and diversity as a central resource for development and learning.
- Reflect on your own leadership and invite participants to critical discussions about working methods used.

Clearly, process facilitation is not only about making use of participatory tools in a correct and constructive way. Facilitation takes place when designing a process or an activity, it takes place when making people feel heard, respected and having real influence, and it takes place when critically reflecting upon how things can be done differently, etc.

So far, local and regional leadership has been described as the role when creating an acceptance within existing policy context for new ways of working. Collaborative leadership is very much about organising and involving stakeholders in a joint learning and development process. Process facilitation is the skills to manage people and their interaction in many different situations. The three roles are closely linked and builds on the same premises, but it is partly different competencies. That is, different individuals, whom complement each other, might take the different roles.

### The participatory toolbox and leadership

Social and communicative competence, as well as access to and the skills to make use of participatory tools, are part of what characterise a good facilitator. Figure 3 illustrates that the way you facilitate processes is grounded in your personality and sociality, but it is made explicit through your communicative competence. The use of pedagogical tools is something you can learn. Nonetheless, the practical use of these tools still has to be reflected in who you are. People notice quite quickly when you are not comfortable with what you do...

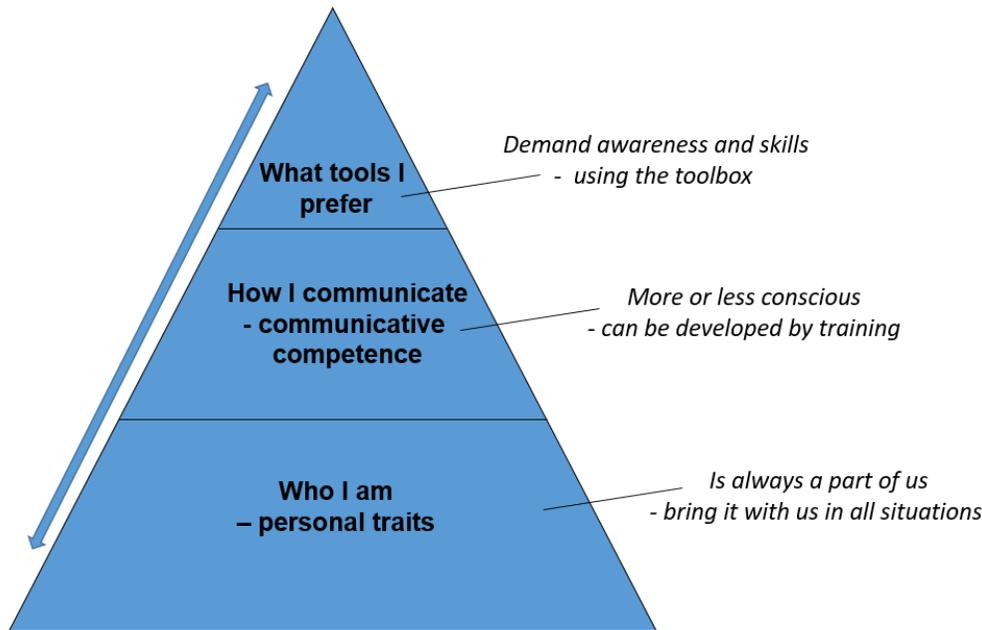


Figure 3. Applying the participatory toolbox will always be grounded in your communicative competence as well as your personality. As a process facilitator you have to be aware of your own strengths and weaknesses.

Participation is always quite fluid. People will come and go voluntarily; take part in one phase of the work and not another and the process facilitator has to accept this fact (to a certain degree of course). It is a question of balancing an open process with a need to achieve tangible outcomes in due time. Such aspects emphasise the need to constantly elaborate questions like 'why do we do this?' and 'where are we now in the process?'. As argued, such issues have to be raised by the facilitator. For many stakeholders, not least farmers and land managers, the most meaningful interaction is when action is taken, not when sitting down discussing or problematising aspects back and forth. Instead of long meetings, they maintain that it is 'when you silently sweat side by side' that the most meaningful interaction occur. Practitioners often have a healthy scepticism towards new ideas being perceived as imposed on them. They have to prioritise their time and focus of attention, and the interaction has to be meaningful. Although this is a shared responsibility for the group, the facilitator has a specific role to deliberate these issues. These are some reasons for why participation has to be understood as so much more than using a toolbox. It is a constant balancing act between what is desirable and feasible, which in turn demand integrity, strong values and professional leadership.

## Guiding principles and values

At this point it should come as no surprise that this Leadership Manual is strongly founded in theories on participatory development, social innovation, and social/collaborative learning. Over the last decades, a lot of approaches, methods and tools have been developed to support such work. What is in common is some basic principles and values that should guide the leadership approach. In this manual we focus on some which will help leaders make their collaboration more effective. Some principles are more theoretical and perhaps harder to apply. For a deeper understanding, there are many other resources available to draw from.

The guiding principles and values to be discussed here is; a) accepting complexity and multiperspectivity, b) systemic thinking and action, c) supporting learning through participation, d) making progress, and e) the need to facilitate and design open processes.

### Accepting complexity and multiperspectivity

Natural resource management is about managing complexity. As a leader this complexity becomes challenging because with it comes diverging interests, lack of clarity, and even conflicts. Although one strive for collaboration, joint decision-making and concerted action, this is easier said than done because you have to simultaneously manage:

- Multiple parties
- Multiple issues
- Different scales
- Cultural differences
- Deeply-held values and worldviews
- Scientific and local knowledge traditions
- Legal and other external preconditions

Keeping this complex – but probably realistic – view on natural resource management in mind, the question arise: Is there a way to approach such complexity? The answer is yes. One way is actually to turn complexity into something positive, that is, use complexity as a way to motivate communication, joint problem solving and innovation.

Related to complexity is multiperspectivity. This refers to that not only each and every stakeholders have different perspectives, but also that each and every human being hold several perspectives within themselves. This concept is central if we are to understand how participatory planning processes develops and how different identities can lead to different actions in one and the same context. People has an inherent ability to move from one perspective to another, and by that learn something new as well as question one’s own limited vision of what is possible. The trick of the trade is to let the multiperspectivity in a group of stakeholders be the building blocks of the richer pictures developed by participants. This enable participants in a group to see new aspects, identify alternative solutions, or find new collaborations.

If you believe and act as reality is not complex and if you do not accept multiperspectivity you will neither be able to work with collaborative and participatory methods.

### Systemic thinking and action

A practical definition of systemic thinking is given by Flood (1999). He states that “*systemic thinking in practice is nothing more or less than a directed process of critical reflective inquiry into the nature of a situation and the relevance of possible different ways of handling the situation*” (p 73). Systemic thinking is dialectic in its very essence. In that sense systemic thinking and action is *praxis*, e.g., the simultaneous and complementary phases of reflection and practice.

Systemic thinking and action refers to an approach where you take the socio-ecological system into account, avoid sectorial thinking, where you have a relational focus on how parts interact and how emergent properties can be used as leverage points. This is different from systematic thinking and action which is when our understanding of complexity emerge from our ability to put different subsystems together, like the pieces of a puzzle. Both systemic and systematic approaches are needed to tackle complex problems, but in water driven rural development we must introduce more of a systemic approach.

The importance of systemic thinking is perhaps most obvious when moving between scales (i.e., systems boundaries). Changing scales can be to move between field, farm, local community and landscape levels. It could also be to change the understanding of which stakeholders are to be involved, which time perspective to use (past, present and future) or which aspects to incorporate in the discussions (ecological, social, economic, etc). Applying systemic thinking in relation to the abovementioned dimensions means focusing on dynamic relationships and new emerging properties, additional stakeholder perspectives, as well as continuously identify new potentials for transformative change.

### Support learning through participation

The most important resource in multi-stakeholder processes are of course the stakeholders themselves. One reason is the knowledge and experiences they bring with them, contributing to innovation and adapted management solutions. Another reason is that they bridge between the stakeholder platform and the wider context, spreading the word, implementing new perspectives in society at large. Finally, stakeholders enable us to identify weaknesses in our shared approaches and suggestions. Knowing what really matters for the individuals they represent, if truly participating, they will be able to improve any output from the multi-stakeholder process.

Participation support stakeholders’ learning by involvement, engagement, a sense of ownership and by using methods that adapt to existing learning styles and preferences. In addition, by applying more participatory tools, stakeholders learn on four different levels simultaneously. They learn about:

1. The issues at hand, for instance, new technologies, the ecosystem, legal frameworks, etc.
2. The methods applied, for instance, the importance of participation for implementation.
3. Each other’s perspective, that is, the strengths and weaknesses of other way of thinking.
4. Your own perspective, become aware of the assumptions and/or limitations of your own thinking.

As a leader you need to enable learning on all levels. This is done by implementing a process design and specific tools that enable and support the participants to reflect on these aspects.

### Making progress

In complex multi-stakeholder processes it is about making progress, more than finding a final solution. The dynamic complexity of socio-ecological systems, such as water driven rural development, implies that you as a leader and together with stakeholders will have hard time to define what will be the solution that makes existing challenges disappear. Rather you identify working approaches that makes it possible for the stakeholders to manage the situation. This is why continuously making progress, and letting people know about that this also happen, is so important. From a pedagogical perspective this also means that you design the process so that you improve the preconditions for final success by each measure taken, such as, building trust or relations, gaining more information, creating richer pictures of the situation, etc.

The traditional focus on finding solutions as quickly as possible have often the negative consequence of resulting in sub-optimal solutions, avoiding conflicts which does not disappear, or ending up in expert-driven development. Approaches that we have learned is not sustainable.

### To facilitate and design open processes

“There is nothing as planned as an open process” is a say among process facilitators. What it means is that for people to be open minded, creative and innovative, one has to create optimal preconditions for communication, learning and collaboration. Trusting people’s ability to contribute is a central guiding principle, as well as understanding that this will not happen without support. It is also important to keep “decision power” and “decision space” apart. Although we know who will have the final say in an issue, and we are transparent about that, we can still create a lot of “space” for participant to have a dialogue and to contribute. The trick is to be able to make participant understand the difference: participating and deciding is not the same.

As a leader you have to make issues like decision power, dialogical space and the role of participation clear from the very beginning. By a clear process design and a trustworthy approach to facilitation, stakeholders will trust the leader’s suggested working approach as well as the person as such (leader and/or facilitator). Who should answer the question “why do we work in the way suggested?” other than the pedagogical leader? It is much easier to answer this question if you have a clear idea about the overall process design and the reasons for choices made.

Making people to participate means fulfilling at least three criteria (Senecah, 200x):

1. Voice – the participants have opportunities to express their views
2. Respect – the participants are respected for what they say
3. Influence – the participants can influence the next steps in the process

If people perceive that these criteria are met, they usually define the process as participatory.

## The progress triangle

The complexity of many water and land management situations is related to the multiple issues, stakes, goals and parties at hand, as well as the difficulties of predicting the consequences of measures taken in socio-ecological systems. Such complexity suggest that progress is only possible if we continuously learn from our experiences made. Three factors can be used to represent the different domains in which progress can occur; relationships, procedures, and substance, what has been labelled “the progress triangle” (Daniels and Walker, 2001). Collaborative water and land management decisions and multi-stakeholder partnerships must consider all these domains.

This progress triangle also reminds us that substantive progress depend on how good we are at implementing innovative methods, tools and procedures, as well as strengthen the relationship among involved parties (figure 4). *Substance* represent the issues (often both practical and scientific) that are to be managed or reached. *Procedure* and methods represent how we chose to work together, from overall process design to specific tools to reinforce learning. *Relationship* represent the importance of trust, power equality and constructive dialogue among people involved.

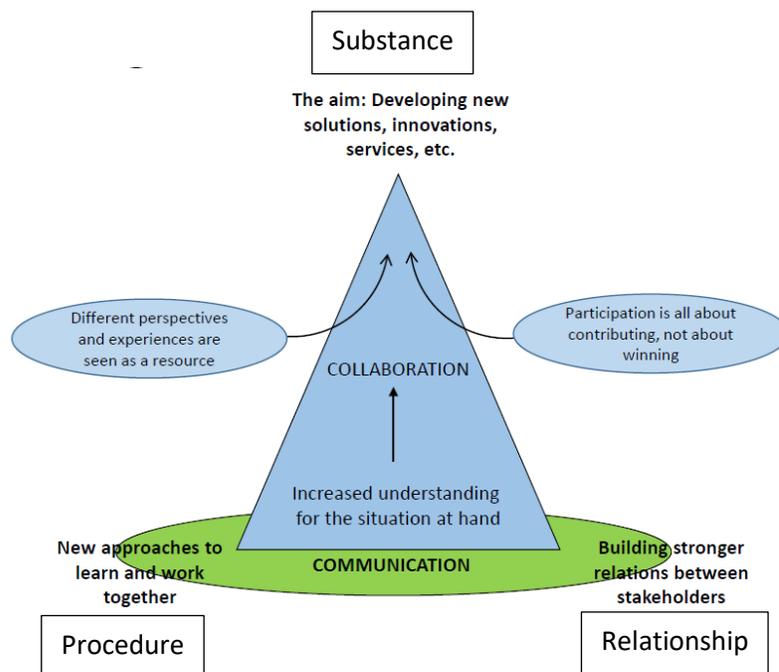


Figure 4. The progress triangle in multi-stakeholder partnerships illustrates the importance of new ways of working together and to develop our relations in order to successfully reach common goals

It is important to remember that innovative water management on landscape level always includes the whole triangle. It also means that different perspectives and experiences are a resource for learning and that participation is about contributing, not winning. If stakeholders hold such attitudes the potentials

for sustained improvements are higher. Furthermore, the three domains overlap and effect one another. By applying new methods and tools we support learning and therefore the outcomes (substance), and if we focus on building trust we create better preconditions for future collaboration (stronger relationship). Consequently, the progress triangle illustrates how substantial improvements in complex issues are dependent on the procedures used, and the relationships built between the participants. Without a process that tries to manage the true complexity, and without strong relationships between the involved participants, the potential for tangible and sustained improvements of the situation will be very small.

In collaborative processes the procedural aspects are put to the fore. Of course, collaborative learning and decision making is about creating substantial improvements in problematic situations. Collaboration is not static, but constantly evolving and adapting to new circumstances. The progress triangle by Daniels and Walker (2001) summarises the core elements of collaboration, putting the earlier mentioned guiding principles and values in a universal model.

### Communicative competence

Communicative competence can be defined as following three dimensions (these dimensions are valid for all participants):

- *Adaptability*, which means that competent communicators assess situations and when necessary adapt their expectations and behaviours accordingly.
- *Appropriateness*, which means employing communication behaviours that are appropriate to the specific situation, as judged by the participants and yourself.
- *Effectiveness*, i.e., means that competent communication behaviours are effective in achieving the shared communication goals.

The leaders, be it administrative or collaborative leaders, becomes communicative role models. This is of course even more so for the process facilitator. They have a responsibility to “walk the talk”. But in order for multi-stakeholder processes to develop and to be successful (in substance, procedure, and relational) all participants have to have some basic communicative competence. Each participant have to be able to adapt to the other participants perspectives, employ behaviour and speech seen as appropriate, and be effective in achieving their own communicative objectives. If done successfully, the participants will also value those criteria and try to communicate with the same ambitions and skills. To reach a communicative rationality of such a kind, emotional and ethical dimensions of interaction have to be appreciated. The participants have to recognise each other as subjects, care for and esteem each other.

### Pedagogical competence – knowing when to do what and why

Pedagogical competence can be described as the ability and the will to apply such guiding principles, values, tools and skills that promote learning and development among the participants. This shall take place in accordance with the objectives of the collaborative efforts and within existing framework and preconditions. It presupposes continuous development of the leader’s own competence. In short, it is the skill to transform good ideas into concrete and relevant learning activities.

Lack of pedagogical competence is often reflected in an overuse of traditional educational, top-down approaches to issues characterised as complex and controversial. As said earlier, different perspectives is a fundamental resource for learning and innovation. A trained pedagogue (leader/facilitator) has the

skills to build on these experiences in a group, but pedagogical competence is more than that. It is also about knowing when to do what. That is, *timing*.

Depending on where the participants are in the collaborative process (progression), the leader must take decisions on what to do next. Sometimes one need to make a temporary halt in the work, and return to earlier issues. Sometimes a window of opportunity emerge, functioning as a leverage point for the group, perhaps leading to a bypass from the planned process. And sometimes you just follow the jointly agreed process design. What it really means is that you as responsible (leader/facilitator) need to be fully aware about achievements made, changing external and internal preconditions, and the participants’ reactions to what happens.

### Making strategic decisions in process design

Now it should be clear that if you as a leader are supposed to suggest a process design for the forthcoming work, there are many dimensions to take into consideration and strategic decisions to be made. First, you need to have a basic understanding of the problem situation at hand, as well as the formal preconditions for the process. Secondly, it is important to be aware of you own assumptions, guiding principles and values which will guide your work (strategically to practically). Finally, there is a lot of decisions to be made about overall approach, methods, tools and the actual facilitation (in real life settings). Figure 5 put these dimensions together in one model.

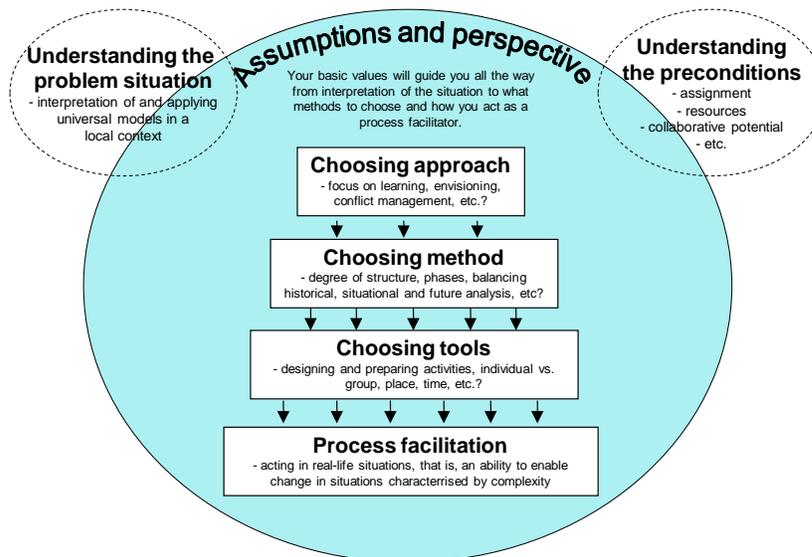


Figure 5. Choosing which tools to use in participatory work is only one kind of decisions needed to be made when designing processes. There also has to be coherence between assumptions, approach, methods, tools and facilitation. If not, participants will eventually notice that there is a mismatch in the process design.

If the collaborative leader is responsible for suggesting an overall process design, the process facilitator will enact the ideas and visions when standing in front of people, practicing participatory work. That is why there has to be a close cooperation between leaders and facilitators throughout the process.

### Management

Integrated land and water management and rural development involves many parties, issues and activities. A model developed within the Waterdrive-project describe nine overall aspects that need to be in place (in a certain degree) if we are to achieve a sustainable development (figure 6). It is about having access to knowledge, being able to test new ideas, a conducive policy environment, for instance, schemes, planning instruments and advisory services, but also concrete activities in capacity building, education, cooperation and of course cost-effective implementation.

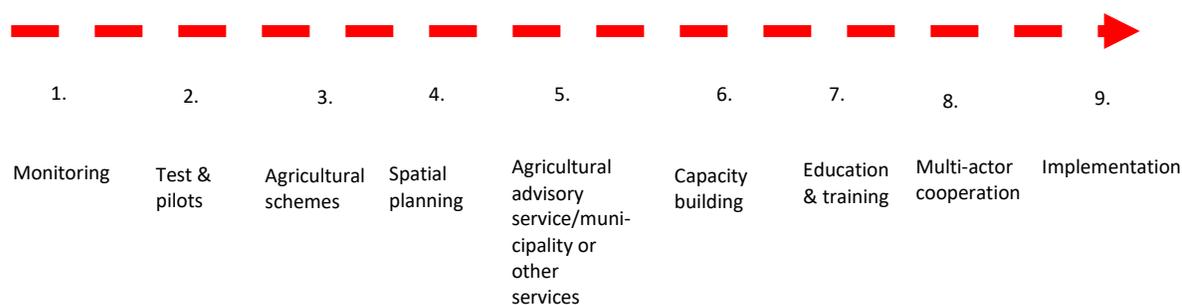


Figure 6. Integrated land and water management is both about creating good preconditions, as well as initiating relevant activities.

The abovementioned model will be the starting point for the forthcoming discussion on how leadership need to change depending of which aspects we discuss. For each part there will be specific questions that is important to ask oneself. The answers will differ, depending on context, but the questions asked will be universal. For instance, regardless situation we have to answer questions like who to involve, how to manage multiple perspectives, how to enable learning and how we can contribute to both increased capacity and trust?

#### Managing different phases by process design

Process design is both a way to create optimal conditions for fulfilment of certain goals, as well as to facilitate learning and decision making in groups. Many different methods and techniques have been developed to meet these ends. In different phases of a designed process different objectives or activities can be demanded. The process design should be problem-driven, not method-driven.

When working through the different phases of a designed process, different perspectives and issues will be made more salient than others will. There will always be a foreground and a background in all discussions. In addition, there will be winners and losers when implementing measures, why issues of power, equality, resource availability, etc., never should be forgotten. A thorough process design and the conscious use of participatory tools can nevertheless minimize the risk of imbalances among stakeholders and that this will create unmanageable obstacles. Being aware of these issues is always the first step, especially from a leadership perspective.

### Ensure enabling external preconditions

One important dimension is to ensure as good preconditions as possible for the work. These will never be perfect when getting started, but will be crucial when doing collaboration and implementing measures. One example is the importance of monitoring, where we need to make sure that we avoid a genuine lack of information (not knowing what is true or false). Another example is having access to supporting funding schemes and a conducive regulatory framework, or access to basic competence to be able to educate or deliver training activities to specific target groups (figure 7).

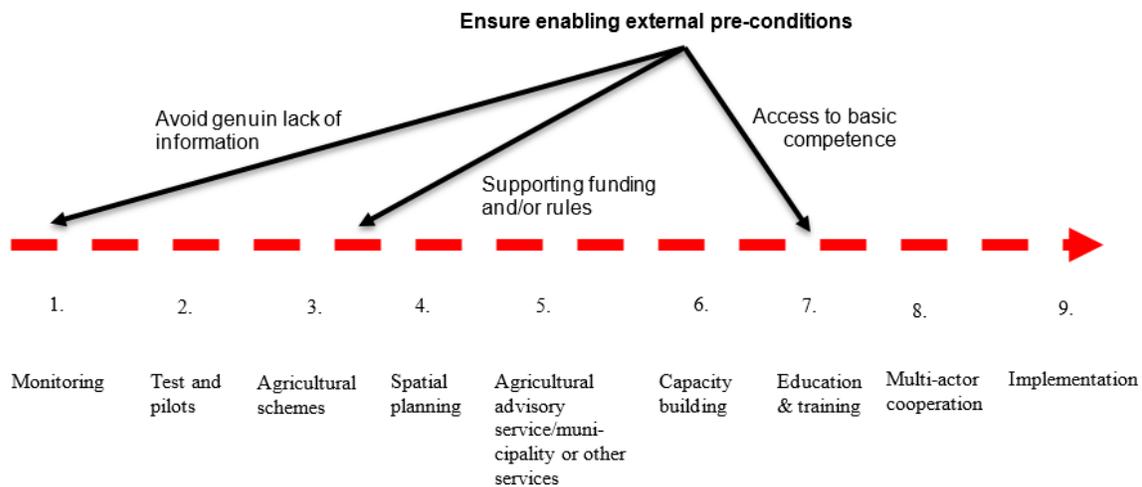


Figure 7. Ensure as good external preconditions as possible.

Although stakeholders can agree on the need to take strong action to improve a situation, they still can be hesitant if the knowledge base is weak, additional costs for implementation is not covered, or they do not find training programs helping them to develop self-confidence and the management skills needed. Some core leadership activities in this preparatory phase is therefore to:

1. Understand the collaborative potential.
2. Invite stakeholders early in the process to get help in doing the analysis of the situation.
3. Impact other actors so that they support the forthcoming work, creating best possible preconditions.
4. Define your own role in the forthcoming process.

The collaborative potential can be assessed using the three corner stones of the progress triangle; substantial issues, procedural issues, and relational issues. If understanding the situation you, as a leader, will be able to build better preconditions. This is an activity the leader does not have to do all alone; one can invite other core stakeholders to help out with the analysis and by doing so early on starting to create engagement and a sense of involvement. Consequently, the assessment of

collaborative potential might show which external actors that must be influenced, so that they might contribute in (or being prepared to) improve existing preconditions. Finally, as an initiator and leader you early must decide how you perceive your role in future work. Some questions to be asked in the assessment of a collaborative potential are structured below.

*Assessment of the situation* is about understanding the collaborative potential and preparing for challenges in multi-stakeholder and cross-sector processes.

- Number and nature of participants? (i.e., easiness to identify)
- History of the situation and relations? (new or long history, volatile, etc)
- What drives the current situation? (specific, identifiable interests, etc)
- Have the parties other viable solutions besides engaging in the process? (or “best alternative to negotiated agreement”)
- Are the issues clear or unclear / controversial or highly controversial?
- Is there little or considerable scientific uncertainty?
- Is relevant information for stakeholders publicly accessible and understandable?
- Are key decision maker involved and committed to collaboration?
- Are resources easily available to support collaboration or not (financial, competence, etc)?
- Level of trust and respect between actors and stakeholders?

If the situations that need collaboration but at the same time seems to have a low potential, it is usually necessary to take measures so that the preconditions improve. This is done during the preparatory phase.

*Assessment of procedural issues* are central to all multi-stakeholder. One reason is that collaboration is not static, it will evolve and needs to constantly adapt to new circumstances (emerging both from within and outside).

- What level of participation characterize water management in the area today (from people not being informed at all to already ongoing, local initiatives)?
- What management approaches have been used in the past (procedural history)? What can be learned from those experiences?
- Is there a need to work individually with different stakeholders before inviting to joint activities?
- What are the legal constraints and who has jurisdiction? (being clear about the framework)
- How big is the actual decision space and where lies the decision power? (potential to influence or making decisions)
- Is mutual learning desired by all stakeholders? (perceptions about being winners or losers)
- Are the resources sufficient for collaborative activities (e.g., time, money, staff)?
- Are there needs for design and facilitation by an impartial party?
- What are the procedural alternatives?

Finally, one also needs to *assess the substantial issues*. Collaboration aims to create substantial improvements in complex situations. But what it is that are to be improved will always be discussed by stakeholders. Some core questions are:

- What are the main issues to be managed? (this is the question we are most used to discuss and work with...)
  - What are the tangible issues?
  - What are the symbolic issues?
- What are the likely sources of tension over these issues (e.g., facts, culture, history, jurisdiction, values, interests, people)?
- Are issues complex? How can complexity be approached, making issues manageable?
- Is new information needed? Is it available? (involvement in knowledge creation)
- Are meanings, interpretations and understanding varied among stakeholders?
  - How does different levels of understanding influence participation, decision power, etc?
  - How are we to manage scientific versus local/tacit knowledge?
  - How to handle situations where there is a genuine lack of information? (we do not know what is true or false, for instance regarding ecological status)
- Is there a need for training and education? Regarding what issues?

If answering or reflecting upon all these questions, you as a leader is much better prepared for the forthcoming work and take actions to create best possible preconditions when starting the joint work.

### Organise relevant internal structures

Perhaps the most obvious part of leadership is to organise internal structures for the work, based on available resources. There is no format that fits all, why one must organise activities based on existing preconditions and needs. One such activity might be to establish test sites and/or pilot project which others can learn from. Another example is to analyse and tune into relevant policy processes in society that might support the ambitions in integrated land and water management. It could be related to spatial planning, but could also relate to sustainable development goals (SDG) or climate adaptation strategies. In addition, it is important to build access to high quality services, such as advisory services, if that does not exists at this point. Finally, internal organising also includes the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships (figure 8).

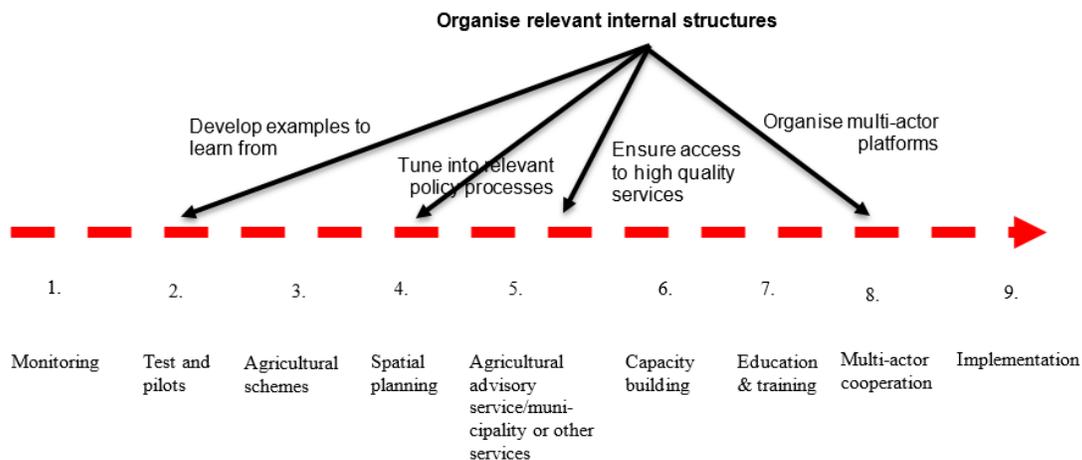


Figure 8. Organise relevant internal structures.

Core leadership activities includes:

1. Organise (different) multi-actor platforms
2. Arguing for and implementing a culture of experiential learning
3. Initiate test arenas and processes to learn from
4. Make sure to have support from other relevant policy processes
5. Avoid lack of basic services when moving from idea to action

It is important to realise that many of these processes does not only involve one multi-stakeholder platform, it might be several but with different actors involved and managing different issues. In one geographical area you might also need to establish platforms on different scales (regional to local). When creating these platforms one start the learning process, making sure that stakeholders start learning from the experiences made early on. Another kind of platform to establish are the test arenas or pilots, as mentioned earlier. Altogether, this will support a culture of experiential learning.

### Implement new ways of working together – link to the participatory toolbox

Having tried to create as good external preconditions as possible and organised to work according to the guiding principles and values, the next phase is to practice all good ideas. Of course, this is about working participatory, using the participatory toolbox, but it involves other dimensions too. Some leadership aspects to reflect upon are:

- How to build increased capacity among stakeholders by focusing on awareness, reflections, new mental models, exchange of experiences, etc?
- How to facilitate in relation to shifting needs, for instance, phases of implementation, progressing communication, group dynamics, etc?
- How to manage changing leadership role both based on how the work progress, as well as changing stakeholder needs?
- How to make sure to be a role-model for communication and learning?
- How to initiate evaluative activities to increase reflexivity (incl. meta-communication)?

As said before, these activities must not be carried out by the collaborative leadership, they can be done by an external process facilitator.



Having the above mentioned principles in mind during the practical phases of the work, the choices made on how to work with stakeholders will be more successful.

As important as the participatory tools used during the very first meetings is the expectations you create among stakeholders. Such expectations are already created in the first invitation letter or calls you make to the stakeholders. It is therefore important to take specific notice on how to formulate yourself in order to let the stakeholders understand that the process they are supposed to encounter is different from what they are used to.

One could have a very broad definition on whom to invite. The list of stakeholder (groups) are often long and one must identify key individuals. Such stakeholder are necessary to have a dialogue with in order to successfully implement the ideas behind the collaborative work to come. As a leader you have to keep in mind that there is always alternative strategies for core stakeholders to reach their own goals rather than getting involved in multi-stakeholder partnerships. They need to be curious enough to come to the table (the first meeting) and when doing that experience the potential of new ways of working together.

### Learn from experience by implementing evaluation tools

Monitoring and evaluation is the systematic data collection, analysis and reporting of activities, processes, outputs and outcomes. The reporting involves statements, judgements and conclusions on what has been done, how it has been experienced and on potential development paths and improvements. Ideally, monitoring and evaluation positively affect current and planned activities, but also future decision-making on implementation strategies.

From a leadership perspective monitoring and evaluation must be understood as a collaborative effort. Together stakeholders can track what is actually done and how well goals are achieved, demonstrate how chosen approaches have contributed to targeted gains, and better understand barriers and needs to improve future activities.

Collecting data in order to monitor and evaluate social processes often require that different tools and methods are used. No single method could fully capture the complexity. Furthermore, one must apply a flexible framework, adapted to the specific needs and preconditions in each unique context. There are tools for evaluation that will contribute to participatory work by doing evaluation in new ways. Most important, is that we monitor and evaluate continuously, collect data from many activities and actors, as well as have a dialogue within the multi-stakeholder platform on how the data should be interpreted and how the results might influence future work. An ongoing process, although with low intensity.

Within a collaborative process focusing on integrated land and water management one will have a lot of different activities to monitor and evaluate. From monitoring of environmental indicators, use of checklists, farmer workshops and training activities, implementation of new management on demo sites, external communication, and policy workshops, etc. All involving social interaction and/or learning. The evaluation methods need to suit the data needs (the desirable), but also be practical and fit within existing resources available (the feasible). Where possible the methods need to be included as a normal part of project activities – not just an add-on.

At the same time we need to be able to draw some general conclusions on success factors for implementation of measures. From an international perspective it would be of added value if one could

ask similar question in different context, in order to see if there are some common answers to our challenges. Some general questions that might be raised are (examples):

- What is being done to implement new measures or influence change?
- With whom and where does these activities take place?
- What practices are changing and in which field of work?
- What impact does the new measures have on performance?
- What benefits are being achieved by the activities?
- What are the main bottlenecks in scaling up and out new measures?
- What challenges to stakeholders perceive in getting involved in organised activities?

An approach to evaluation that aim to improve ongoing work is formative evaluation. By using the evaluation toolbox this way one will contribute to an increased participation also when following up activities and monitoring progress.

## Broadening the perspective

### Leadership from a systemic and holistic perspective

This Leadership Manual gives some guidelines on how to think and approach complex, collaborative and cross-sector local water management. One has to emphasise that there is not one method or one approach that fits all purposes and situations. Each leader has to find their own way forward, but there are some values and principles that will help them ask the right questions.

Figure 10 summarise some of the most important success factors in one model. In different phases you have different focus, but all need to be taken care of. From anchoring among stakeholders and existing policy context and making sure that supportive structures are in place to enabling qualitative social interaction, designing and facilitating the work.

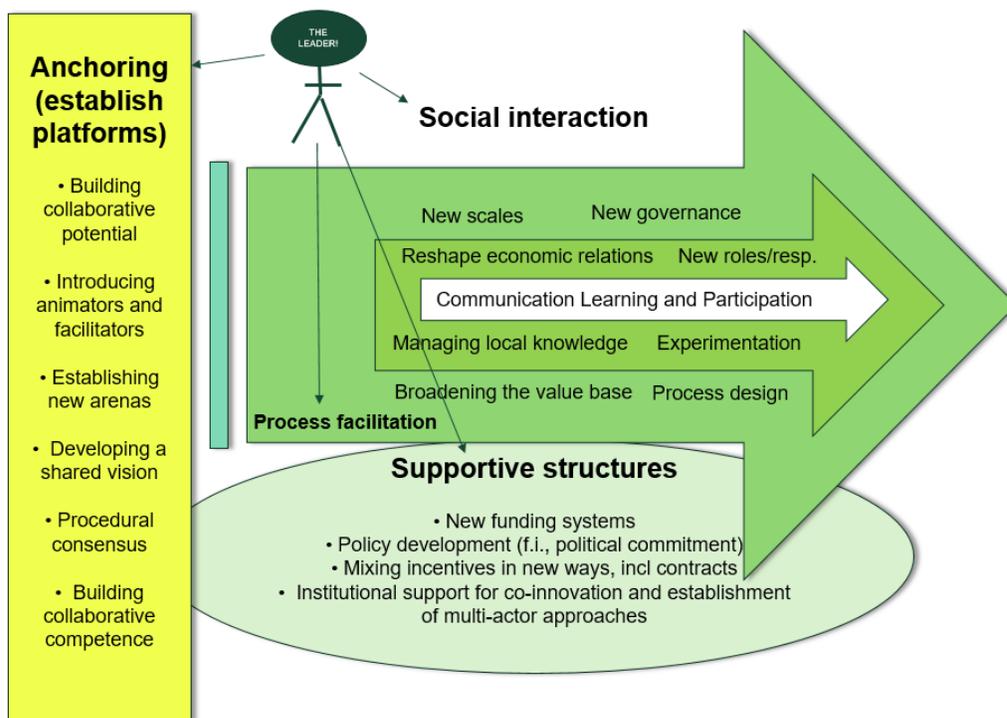


Figure 10. Success factors for collaborative multi-stakeholder processes.

Each leader will have their own preferences and style. By learning from experiences and the ones you work with, it is possible to make progress not only in water management, but also in leadership progression. Such journey is worthwhile, but not always straightforward.

## Concluding remarks

The Leadership Manual aimed to inspire, motivate and strengthen capacities among leaders in cross-sector water management initiatives. The skills described in the manual is universal for many different contexts, but perhaps especially important to keep in mind in natural resource management.

It has been argued that leadership in complex and sometimes controversial issues is something one learn by doing. This is true, regardless if talking about administrative leadership, collaborative leadership or process facilitation. There are no textbook as good as real life experiences. By working together with colleagues, one can support each other to develop the skills.

No doubt, the importance of leadership in water management is central to its success. As a leader you have an important role to fill. Take the chance and make the best possible out of it.

## References

Campbell, A. 1995. Landcare: Participative Australian approaches to inquiry and learning for sustainability. *Journal of Soil and Water Conservation*, 50 (2), pp 125-131.

Chrislip, D and Larson, C. (1994). *Collaborative Leadership: How Citizens and Civic Leaders Make a Difference*. Jossey Bass: San Francisco.

Daniels, S and G Walker. 2001. *Working Through Environmental Conflicts: The Collaborative Learning Approach*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Flood, R K. 1999. *Rethinking the Fifth Discipline: Learning Within the Unknowable*. London: Routledge.

Senecah, S. 2004. The Trinity of Voice: The Role of Practical Theory in Planning and Evaluating the Effectiveness of Environmental Participatory Processes. In Depoe, S, J Delicath & M-F Aepli Elsenbeer. *Communication and Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Smith, D and Becker, J. 2018. Essential skills of cross sector leadership. In Stanford Social Innovation Review. *Cross Sector Leadership: Approaches to Solve Problems At the Scale at Which They Exist*, pp 4-7.

Wondolleck, J and Yaffee, S. 2000. *Making Collaboration Work: Lessons from Innovation in Natural Resource Management*. Washington.