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LEARNING AND ACTION ALLIANCES AS A VEHICLE FOR INNOVATION AND ACTIVE LEARNING- HOW TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY BASED (FLOOD) RISK MANAGEMENT?

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ABSTRACT

There is an increasing challenge posed to flood managers nowadays. In the last few decades, the need to move from flood defences to flood risk management, has prompted new ways of working to 'live with floods'. (Dudley et al, 2013). Consequently, flood management is not any more seen as an 'engineering activity' but as a multi stakeholder process, which attempts to deliver the most acceptable responses to increasing flood risk that satisfy the most stakeholders. The EC Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) specifies a set of formal requirements that support this paradigm shift.

An important change can be identified in the attitudes towards the participation of the civil society or community in the flood management activities. Working with 'the public' is not to be considered as a 'necessary evil', but as an essential activity (Dudley et al, 2013).

The EC Floods Directives postulates the active involvement of the relevant stakeholders in the flood risk management planning process.

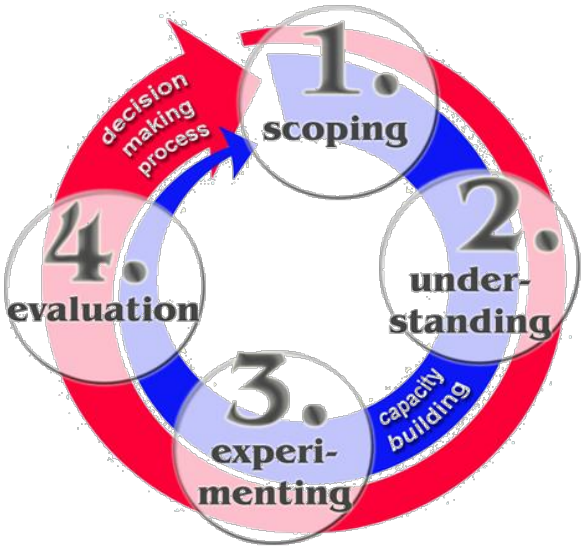
> *(Article 10 (2)): [Member States shall encourage active involvement of interested parties in the production, review and updating of the flood risk management plans referred to in Chapter IV.]*

However, the Directive does not give any guidance on the development and implementation of the appropriate governance strategy. The need is obvious for finding a good governance[1] concept which supports the implementation process best and which will lead to acceptance and proper application of the new paradigm in flood risk management. A fundamental issue that is to be resolved is how the necessary stakeholder participation in the decision-making process can be carried out cost-effectively and in a timely manner so that the results are not technically but also socially acceptable.

This transition towards good governance is a long-term process (Ashley, 2008) that cannot be intrinsically initiated, but should be triggered and governed throughout the process. A framework for engaging stakeholders should deliver the roadmap, covering the implementation of different flood risk mitigation strategies and the managing interests of various stakeholder groups in a *just* manner (Manojlovic et al., 2011, Vojinovic&Abbott, 2012).

[1] Here, "governance" is defined in general as the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (UN – Economic and social commission of Asia and the Pacific). It is more a general road map to progress rather than being a well-defined destination to reach. Good governance stands for a multifaceted decision making process where the societal goals are pursued with the interactions of all the interested actors in all specific fields of development and in which ethical and democratic issues are respected, such as responsibility, accountability, transparency, equity, and fairness. This process requires promotion of dialogues in terms of decision-making, and participation of multiple actors.

This intervention will introduce the generic concept of the ***Learning and Action Alliances (LAAs)***[2] that has been developed as a vehicle for framing and supporting the engagement of the key stakeholders including the civil society enhancing the community based flood risk management (Figure 1).



Objective
Phase 1 Scoping: (Stakeholder analysis) Development of shared vision of the problem
Phase 2 Understanding& envisioning; Development of shared vision of where to get to
Phase 3 Experimenting: Capture and formulate options, interests, desires and ideas of different stakeholder groups on how to mitigate flood risk
Phase 4 Evaluation: Discuss the developed options and create a list of the prioritised strategies and recommendations

Figure 1: General Framework of Participatory Planning in a LAA, supporting the community based flood risk management (adapted from Ashley et al., 2008)

There is a number of projects and initiatives EU wide which investigate(d) the potential of the LAAs support the participatory planning and community based flood risk management (e.g. INTERREG IVb Projects SAWA, MARE, FloodReslienCities).

Within the FP7 Project PEARL (2014-2018), the Learning and action Alliances are being developed and implemented to support the holistic risk governance in coastal regions prone to extreme meteorological events (http://www.pearl-fp7.eu/). The role of community in the crisis management is being explored and to be discussed within the LAAs.

The INTERREG IVb Project CAMINO (2013-2015) is using the LAAs as a means to strengthen the collaboration between the public sector, research, industry and civil society for climate mainstreaming (http://www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/projects/details/&tid=157).

The LAAs are currently being considered as a vehicle to support the transition towards the inclusive governance practices in the disaster risk management in Serbia with the focus on floods. It has been developed as a follow up activity of the OSCE regional forum on inclusive flood risk management practices held in Belgrade, Serbia, November 18th, 2013.

[2] The concept of the LAAs has evolved along a range of EU and national projects. Its origin is to be found in the concept of the Learning Alliance as defined and developed in the SWITCH project (Butterworth et al, 2011). There, a Learning Alliance (LA) is defined as: "a group of individuals or organisations with a shared interest in innovation and the scaling-up of innovation, in a topic of mutual interest… LAs are about getting innovation embedded into delivery processes and fit the model for the local needs and context. Within the INTERREG IVb projects SAWA and MARE the concept of the LA has been adopted and further developed to include the 'active' component, delivering the concept of the Learning and Action Alliances (LAAs) and applied in the sense of the EC Floods Directive across Europe.

Based on the broad experience gained within those EU and national projects and initiatives, the intervention will outline and open the floor for the discussion on the main challenges and lessons learned in regards to the community based flood risk management, which can be summarised as:

1. Above all TRUST is required in and for all concerned
2. Involvement of the civil society goes beyond mere assistance and the delivery of support. A sound combination of the capacity building and decision support methods and tools tailored to its needs is required.
3. Capacity building is an important aspect and should underline the participatory process
4. The tools and methods for raising risk awareness and capacity building should address the people both emotionally and rationally by providing a hands-on experience on floods and delivering figures and facts. The tools should be embedded into strategies for capacity building.
5. Dare to try something new; e.g. develop and apply tools such as Flood Animation Studio (Manojlovic&Pasche 2011) for live simulation of flood events in order to raise risk awareness of communities.
6. For the community based flood risk management, the generic concepts of inclusive governance that can be tailored to the individual needs and local contexts are required. Those “local satellites” should share the common ground, which should be based on social justice, promotion of innovation or transparency.
7. Multi level governance concepts, such as the participation ladder, seem to be the method to involve different stakeholder groups with different interests, level of affect, roles or initial knowledge in the (disaster) flood risk management. However, their efficient implementation is still a matter of research and long-term best practice examples are rather scarce.

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