

Implementing MEasuRes for Sustainable Estuaries (IMMERSE)

6.2 Improve stakeholder integration by analyzing and discussing past experiences

November 2019

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1. Introduction

In addition to being complex and natural environments, estuaries can also be subject to complicated management structures, resulting in the need to consider diverse stakeholder interests. The complexity of estuaries makes it difficult to find acceptance for solutions that are sustainable, i.e. at the same time socially, economically and environmentally feasible. To improve the implementation of sustainable solutions under such a complexity, requests integrated, collaborative and adaptive governance (EMOVE, 2015¹). The core element of governance is horizontal and vertical cooperation and knowledge sharing between actors on multiple institutional levels. For sustainable development and governance, long term strategies are formulated, which at the same time must be flexible and responsive to short term changes (van Buuren et al., 2014², EMOVE, 2015¹).

As a response to this the aim of IMMERSE is both to involve local stakeholder integration in the design, testing and the implementation of measures as well as provide generic knowledge on how to improve stakeholder involvement.

A first step in the stakeholder process, i.e. before integrating stakeholders in the measure development processes, a mapping of relevant stakeholders was undertaken if not yet available (IMMERSE Task 6.1). In IMMERSE the partners mapped stakeholders from project estuaries as well as from across the NSR. As a second step, an analysis and discussion of past experiences of stakeholder involvement should be undertaken to improve the stakeholder integration. This is done under IMMERSE task 6.2 for which the results are presented in this report.

Two steps were applied to obtain experiences and information that have been used as the basis for how to improve stakeholder integration:

- 1) Acquiring experiences of previous stakeholder integration activities, and
- 2) Discussions among IMMERSE partners and with stakeholders.

¹ EMOVE, 2015, A governance vision on adaptive estuarine management, WP4 Governance vision, <http://www.emove-project.eu/publications/emove-results>

² Buuren, M.W. van, P.P.J. Driessen, H.J.F.M. van Rijswijk, G.R. Teisman, (2014). Towards legitimate governance strategies for climate adaptation. Combining insights from legal, planning and democratic perspectives. Regional Environmental Change. 14 (3): 1021-1033



2. Acquiring experiences of previous stakeholder activities

Methodology

The experiences of previous stakeholder integration activities were achieved through a questionnaire distributed to respondents in the *Elbe*, *Humber* and *Göta Älv estuaries* (Figure 1).

The questionnaire included questions on the projects where stakeholder activities had been held, what type of activities that had been performed, the reasons for stakeholder involvement, general experiences and unexpected outcomes and lessons learned.

The questionnaire results were based on activities in previous projects, i.e.: Dialogue process Tideelbe³; Forum Tideelbe⁴; Humber Landscape and Investment Study Phase 2⁵; Managed Realignment (MR) sites⁶; and the NSR project EMOVE⁷. The river Göta älv divides into the nearby Göta- and Nordre älv estuaries (Figure 1) which both were simultaneously included in previous stakeholder activities within the NSR project EMOVE and therefore also included in the responses.

Elbe

The first *Dialogue process Tideelbe* process was organized in 2013 by Hamburg Port Authority (HPA) and the national German Waterways and Shipping Administration (WSV),

- a) for information exchange / joint fact finding on the estuarine system of the Elbe;
- b) discussion on sediment management (including all aspects e.g. treatment of contaminated sediment and finding a suited location for sediment disposal));
- c) discussion on river engineering measures. About 60 different stakeholders of the Elbe estuary were involved.

The format consisted of information exchange by presentations of estuary experts, discussions within plenary sessions and workshops (3 topics: system understanding, sediment management, river engineering measures). A final report with recommendations for the responsible administrations for managing the estuary was produced in 2015.

³ <http://www.dialogforum-tideelbe.de/>

⁴ <https://www.forum-tideelbe.de/>

⁵ <https://www.shiregroup-idbs.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Humber-Landscape-and-Investment-Study-Phase-2-stakeholder-leaflet.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.floodcba2.eu/site/wp-content/uploads/Managed-realignment-in-the-Humber-Estuary-UK.pdf>

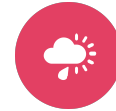
⁷ <http://www.emove-project.eu/publications/emove-results>



Figure 1. Areas included in the study, i.e. Elbe, Humber and Göta Älv estuaries.

One of the outcomes of the process described above was the advice to continue the process as not all topics have been addressed to a final extent, i.e. the discussion of the implementation of river engineering measures in order to positively influence tidal dynamics and related sediment transport. Therefore, in 2016 the estuary partnership **“Forum Tideelbe”** was established and financed by the City of Hamburg Ministry of Environment & Energy and Ministry of Economy, Transport and Innovation), involving again all estuarine stakeholders. Duration is 4 years and may be extended if considered necessary. The focus is on discussing and proposing suitable locations for river engineering measures e.g. realignment or reconnecting anabranches of the Elbe. Again, a final report will be produced with recommendations for the responsible administrations.

For the first time at the Elbe estuary main stakeholder groups were involved in a discussion on conducting sediment management measures. The aim of the first process was amongst other objectives (see above) to achieve a better (common) understanding of all aspects of sediment management conducted by HPA and WSV as well as a better communication between different stakeholder groups and acceptance of different interests, respectively (within the process of finding a suited location for sediment disposal). The second still ongoing process consists of the continuation of the first process – but in a different way, as described above. Now the focus is on finding possible locations for river engineering measures that contribute both to the improvement of sediment management as well as ecological aspects of the estuarine system.



Humber

The **Humber Landscape and Investment Study 2**, which covered the area of the Humber Flood Risk Management Strategy (HFRMS), is a stakeholder-centered study aimed at identifying how flood risk management schemes align with other key environment, social and economic drivers in order to secure investment in future flood defense works. The consultancy Sheils Flynn was commissioned to undertake the study in 2015.

Following the completion of the study in 2016, the HFRMS is being reviewed in collaboration with Local Authority partners around the estuary, with the addition of tidally dominated extent of the estuary's tributaries, i.e. the Rivers Ouse, Aire, Don and Trent. Sheils Flynn was commissioned by the Environment Agency to undertake a second phase for the Humber Landscape and Investment Study to cover the extended areas and produce comparative analysis reports for the flood areas within the HFRMS Comprehensive Review study area.

Stakeholder involvement played a key role in the project, with the aim to provide local knowledge and input into the opportunity maps which could be built on for the project. The stakeholders were involved in the initial opportunity mapping exercise and their initial input on opportunities will be refined as the project moves forward. Follow up conversations have taken place to ensure their input are included accurately, and will continue to ensure the opportunity maps are drafted in line with their input.

In addition, Humber **Managed Realignment (MR)** sites aimed at delivering compensatory fresh water/intertidal habitat to enable flood risk management activities to be carried out. The aim with the stakeholder activities in the Skeffling MR was to keep everyone informed, gain advice, understand concerns, so that the concerns can be addressed and the project can be delivered smoothly.

Göta Älv

EMOVE (Estuaries on the move) was an Interreg North Sea Region project with the aim to identify what needs to be developed in order to maintain accessible, flood proof, economically and ecologically sustainable estuaries. The aim was also to contribute to increased collaboration between stakeholders from relevant organisations. The Swedish study involved investigations on stakeholder experiences related to the estuaries of the river Göta älv, i.e. the Göta älv and Nordre älv estuaries, regarding flood risks and barriers as a solution, stormwater management, and disposal at sea and alternative management strategies of clean excavated soft clay masses. The stakeholder activities were undertaken to investigate how to improve the current management activities within the areas of flood risk and storm water. The stakeholders were involved in different projects including very early pre-project stages and ongoing ordinary daily planning and management. Within EMOVE they participated in the interviews and workshops which were more a follow up investigation of the current stakeholder activities and was aimed as a basis for how to improve the current management: What are the barriers/obstacles, what would be needed to overcome the barriers/obstacles, and suggestions on how to make this happen.

All projects considered included representatives from national and/or regional agencies and authorities, local authorities and various NGOs as well as other interests (Table 1).

The **type of stakeholder activities** varied from public information activities undertaken for the MR PHS, Alkborough, Kilnsea Wetlands and Donna Nook schemes to multiple activities in the other projects which all included workshops/discussion meetings combined or complemented with other activities.



In the *Skeffling MR* lessons learned from the earlier MR schemes (i.e. Paull Holme Strays (PHS), Alkborough, Kilnsea Wetlands, Donna Nook) led to the set-up of an extensive communications and engagement plan for the Skeffling MR. Activities included drop in sessions, site visits, workshops, newsletters, regular update meetings for specific organisations and additional consultations on planning documents. In the Skeffling MR the stakeholders were also involved throughout development of outline design and there is a plan to continue engagement during detailed design and construction and there will be continued involvement of many of the stakeholders post construction.

In the *Humber Landscape and Investment Study* stakeholder opportunity mapping was performed through stakeholder opportunity mapping workshops. In total three workshops focusing on three different areas of the extended areas.

In the two Elbe projects (*Dialogue process Tideelbe and Forum Tideelbe*) different working formats were conducted with facilitation by an external moderator: 1. information by presentations of estuarine experts, 2. discussion in plenary groups and smaller workshops, during which representatives of stakeholder groups have been/ are actively involved. In the second process different levels have been established: a) Plenum of all stakeholder groups, b) steering committee of elected representatives of the stakeholder groups that can take decisions based on proposals of the plenum and working groups, and c) small working groups consisting of experts of different stakeholder groups working on different possibilities of conducting measures. Once per year a public symposium is organized.

In the EMOVE Göta älv project also different activities were done: 1) Pre-interviews as a basis for the discussions in the follow up workshops; 2) two workshops; and 3) follow up questionnaire or phone interviews.

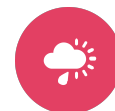
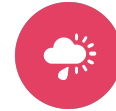


Table 1. Stakeholders involved in the stakeholder activities in projects performed in the Humber, Elbe and Göta älv estuaries.

Project	Humber Landscape and Investment Study Phase 2	Skeffling MR	Dialogue process Tideelbe and Forum Tideelbe	EMOVE
Stakeholders	Internal Environment Agency teams (team attending workshops for their respective areas)	Local community. Live in the area and affected by the work	Representatives of administrations of the federal 3 states and municipalities, WSV, HPA	National Agencies (Trafikverket, Sjöfartsverket, Havs- och vattenmyndigheten (HaV))
	Local Authorities (FRM team, planning authority, conservation team)	Local Authority: planning authority		Regional authorities (County administration boards): Länsstyrelsen Västra Götalands län, Västra Götalandsregionen
	NGOs (e.g. Wildlife Trusts)	NGO: Interest in habitat creation and links with the wider estuary/ drainage system/ archaeology	Water boards, leisure organizations (motorboat, sailing and recreational fishing), different nature NGOs and a nature foundation, fishermen, tourism, industry and trade, and farmers	Local authorities: Gothenburg (planning, waste and water management, park and greenery, environmental agency), Öckerö, Kungälv
	Water Companies (i.e. Yorkshire Water)	Landowners close to the area of works.		NGOs: Göta Älvs Vattenvårdsförbund, Göteborgsregionen, Svenska Naturskyddsföreningens representant i Göta Älvs vattenråd, Hökälla grönt arbete och rehab
	Natural England	Natural England/MMO: Regulatory body		Companies: Port of Gothenburg, Gryaab AB (Sewage and stormwater management)



Results

Positive experiences

The expected impacts of the stakeholder involvements were rather similar in all projects: to achieve improved relationships for the actual projects and thereby smoothen the planning process, improve the acceptance and the handling of the activities related to different management strategies, fundamental information gathering for the project, better understanding of local place priorities. An additional expected impact in EMOVE was to improve knowledge on which stakeholders that should cooperate and ideas on how to improve the management. The major benefits of the EMOVE stakeholder activities, in addition to improved communication among the stakeholders, was increased awareness of the needs, and how to achieve those needs, among the stakeholders both interviewed and those attending the workshops.

The stakeholder involvement was also found very valuable and improved the relationships among the different stakeholders, as well as among the stakeholders and the different projects and new awareness was achieved and new information was raised. The involvement created better understanding for the projects as well as for different interests. It also created increased knowledge, for example about the complex conditions for estuarine and sediment management and it increased the support of the projects. In addition, for the *Humber Landscape and Investment Study 2* the stakeholder activities were needed to obtain the opportunity maps which were varied and broad due to the attendee's local knowledge, interests and organizational representatives:

The stakeholder activity was assessed to be incredibly valuable and important for the project. Lack of stakeholder input would mean that the opportunity maps are not beneficial or informative, thus reducing the success of the project.

For EMOVE, also, the stakeholder activities were crucial and contributed to increased knowledge regarding risks and pressures, potentials and solutions, barriers for solutions and potentials, and how to overcome the barriers and contributed to improve current co-operations.

The *Skeffling MR* activities resulted in the EA being able to address concerns in many cases allowing the team to get some very apposed stakeholders and local press articles on board with supporting the project. Among the benefits also pointed out from the *Skeffling MR* activities are improved trust, and the gained information and understanding on various key issues.

The *Skeffling* scheme is currently in the planning system. The activities in EMOVE contributed to activities undertaken by the municipality including establishing improved stakeholder involvement, and in the *Tideelbe* projects an improvement of relationships and the speaking terms of involved participants during the process itself.

Fulfillment of expectations

All activities have not yet been evaluated regarding the fulfillment of hopes and expectations. The second *Tideelbe* process, i.e. the proposition of a suitable location of river engineering measurements, is still ongoing. Currently the stakeholders involved are found to have a strong understanding of the need of measures, but also do not want it being implemented in their own backyards'.

In both the Humber and Göta älv activities some invited stakeholders didn't attend all the workshops which may mean some opportunities and/or interests are missing. The stakeholders that attended the workshops were, however, well engaged and there were stimulating conversations providing increased understanding among



different needs and interests in all projects. Both from personal and professional perspectives in the sense of *now that I know you, I realized that you are not as bad as I always thought* (Tideelbe) or realizations of each other's, not only competences and interests, but also responsibilities, budgets and abilities (EMOVE). Therefore, personal communication/contact is strongly recommended.

Challenges and obstacles

An experience pointed out as a valuable observation was that not all members/organizations of one stakeholders group react similarly and can be rather individual. For example, one of the environmental NGOs in the *Tideelbe* processes was more open for constructive discussions, whereas another one within the same group did not change their point of view at all. Reasons may be related to affection or awareness/openness for new solutions. A general recommendation and experience related to this, is that the stakeholder activity process benefits from an external moderation team being responsible for set up communication rules, the communication itself and advising the project initiators. Another experience from the Tideelbe project is that one has to keep in mind that there may exist hidden (political or economic) agendas may exist which may prevent the most optimal result or the most effective solution of a project.

Finding a date/time for activities, along with a location for a venue, is an major challenge in most projects, and specifically mentioned in EMOVE. This was related to time consumption and increased resource demands.

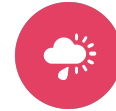
One of the stakeholder groups asked for payment and in the EMOVE the organizational priorities were often mentioned. In *Humber Landscape and Investment Study 2* also the spatial dispersion among stakeholders contributed to the difficulty. In the Tideelbe also the different levels of understanding of the estuarine processes were mentioned as a challenge.

Among the undesirable outcomes related to the stakeholder activities were potential or apparent hidden agendas ('stakeholder did not play with open cards') that prevented finding the most rational solution. Another one was that the stakeholder activities slowed down and made the process longer due to conflicting opinions and that there was a pressure to accept all info/ advice/ appease every input.

Lessons learned

All projects had reported lessons learned and recommendations based on those, i.e.:

- Involve the stakeholders early in the process
- It is important to plan sufficiently ahead in advance of the meeting and scheduled it as far in advance as possible in order to get the most people attending
- It is important to manage expectations early in the process. Increased input into communications is necessary to really understand stakeholder concerns. It is very important to actually listen and ask questions about concerns
- Hire a good and experienced external moderator who is familiar with the locals' mentality;
- Be aware of hidden agendas
- Consider that the process costs a lot of time and capacities
- Consider that rational arguments are not always the most important to come to a solution, but that emotions of people also play an important role
- Mutual trust is very important.



3. Experiences among IMMERSE partners and with stakeholders

Methodology

The compiled results from the questionnaires were analyzed and presented prior further discussed during the interactive session on Governance at the 1st IMMERSE Transnational Exchange Lab⁸. The participants invited to the session were those mapped in IMMERSE Task 6.1.

The aim during the session was to achieve further experiences, but also to achieve information to provide a basis to develop relevant strategies for stakeholder interaction as well as other recommendations on how to improve integration. There were two specific objectives:

- Assess the importance of stakeholder participation among the participants
- Define actions for improving stakeholder participation

The major questions were:

- Is stakeholder involvement important? (If not, why?)
- Should we and how can we improve stakeholder involvement?
 - What is current involvement and by whom?
 - Who and why should they be involved?
 - What are the barriers to their involvement?
 - Who takes the action?

The discussions were based on individual replies (post-it responses), group discussions followed by an open discussion.

Results

In the governance discussions at the 1st IMMERSE TEL conference all three discussion groups agreed that it is crucial to invest in a common understanding, and a specific suggestion to realize this included joint fact finding. This also includes agreeing on a common definition of key terms and concepts, and to jointly define the problem(s), threats, barriers and possibilities. Considering this, it was also agreed that it is crucial to involve as many stakeholders as possible, from as an early a point in the process as possible. A starting point to jointly finding solutions to an estuary management problem, should be to organise open meetings and workshops where as many stakeholders as possible are invited. These could/should serve to get to know the problem and the task at hand, but also for the stakeholders to get to know each other in a positive setting and to encourage an atmosphere of knowledge-sharing, knowledge-creation and joint problem-solving.

Participants discussed how it is beneficial to try and engage high levels of responsibility, for instance county governors, as well as politicians and local municipalities. One of the groups emphasized that it is crucial to employ a professional facilitator that can serve as an independent actor to guide the discussions in a calm atmosphere. The benefits of organizing such workshops were seen as clearly kicking off a process in an organised way, and it was emphasized that all views should be taken into consideration and that workshop reports should be comprehensive, easy to read and accessible to the public. However, in order to start the stakeholder engagement process, participants suggested that the regional authorities should appoint a responsible party who oversees the stakeholder process.

⁸ [1st IMMERSE Transnational Exchange Lab, 12-13 June 2019, Gothenburg, Sweden](#)



It was clear from the discussions of all three groups that there is a need for action, and that stakeholder engagement processes should show also the alternative scenarios; what would happen if no measures are implemented at all. In addition, the importance of funding and costs must not be ignored during the stakeholder processes. Specific exercises for workshops were suggested by participants, including the joint development of business cases (with or without dredging), to try and make the workshops real eye-openers for stakeholders. Lastly, it was emphasized once more that organisers of workshops should really make the effort to understand the stakeholder needs and to invest in creating a sense of ownership. However, the issue of how to fund such workshops was raised by the discussion groups, and the main funding opportunity seemed to be coming from EU projects. In line with this suggestion, the idea of organizing an annual workshop on flood protection was also brought forward,

The key messages from the interactive session were

- Involve stakeholders at an early stage
- Find a good facilitator which should have a mandate by authorities but should remain neutral.

The session also ended with a question on the funding problematic: how and who will pay to involve the different stakeholders? Unfortunately, no answer or concrete suggestions were provided. Previous studies and experiences, however, indicate that once a process has started the benefits and gains will become apparent and the need of a broad stakeholder involvement is cost effective under the condition that the objectives are relevant for the stakeholders, the meetings are not too frequent at the same time as there is a continuum and enough time to build trust, there is a neutral or shared moderatorship. The importance of building trust was also found as a key element in successful stakeholder-based governance within the EMOVE project where recommendations on how this is achieved between stakeholders, government and experts, was provided well in agreement with the results here including both the experiences from the Elbe, Humber and Göta älv Estuaries and the workshop key messages, i.e. (EMOVE Governance vision, 2015)⁹:

- initiate and stimulate an informal and continuous dialogue;
- develop a shared view on the functioning of the estuarine system;
- apply an action-orientated approach in which long-term visioning is combined with the short-term action
- Enlarge the room for solutions (also – for argument's sake, letting go of set spatial claims and regulation), and
- creating interdependency between stakeholders.

⁹ A governance vision on adaptive estuarine management, EMOVE project, <http://www.emove-project.eu/publications/emove-results>



4. Conclusions

This report describes past experiences on the integration of stakeholders in estuary management projects with the aim of providing this integration. The key outcome were the following:

- Stakeholders should be involved early in the process; expectations should be managed at this stage;
- Stakeholder involvement should include informal and continuous dialogue;
- Good communication and planning are key to the success of stakeholder involvement, as well as the success of the project;
- An external moderator with a good understanding of local conditions should be involved;
- Consider that the process costs a lot of time and capacities;
- Interactions and Interdependence between stakeholders should be encouraged;
- An action-oriented approach should be applied, including both short-term and lon-term actions;
- A shared view of the functioning of the estuary system should be developed;
- Creative thinking and solution development should be included to stimulate discussions and broaden options;
- Consider that not always rational arguments are important to come to a solution, but that also emotions of people play an important role;
- Mutual trust is very important; In that perspective, one should be aware of hidden agendas.