

Common but differentiated learning

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Common but differentiated learning

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- Transformation is complex and multi-level governance the admittance of this fact. Our paper presents the lessons learnt from a number of projects, which were / are meant to foster fruitful dialogue and transformative learning among a variety of actors. The projects are united by local climate action as the chosen political arena, our assumption that a level playing field or 'middle ground' is needed, and questions such as: How to build effective coordination structures between horizontal and vertical lines? How to facilitate common but differentiated learning? And how to measure and monitor the 'fruitfulness' of such dialogue?
- In trying to answer these questions we draw on applied research from transformative governance projects in Europe, Asia and Africa. One example given is the V-LED project, which will – in the context of the post 2015 agenda, the implementation of the Sendai Framework of Action, the adoption of the SDGs, and 'après Paris' – promote platforms for exchange on local climate action in four countries with very different political systems: communist Vietnam, post-apartheid South Africa, Kenya and the Philippines. Our research aims at understanding the coordination mechanisms that may lead to the emergence of dialogue, learning and eventually climate action in multi-level governance systems.

The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors.

Introduction

This paper presents the experiences of two programmes of the German Federal Ministry of Environment **supporting multi-level governance for climate action**. The first one took place between 2013 and 2015 in the form of a national support programme called *Klimaschutzdialog (KSD)* – Climate Dialogueⁱ – which culminated in a German contribution supporting local climate action in the 21st Conference of Parties in Paris (the *Hanover Declaration*ⁱⁱ). The KSD was part of the German National Climate Initiative (NKI) that was initiated in 2008 and by 2014 had already implemented 19,000 GHG reduction programmes. Within KSD, climate dialogues between varied stakeholders helped to create communicative bridges within this ambitious initiative that provides technical, financial and managerial support to reach Germany's greenhouse gas reduction targets. The second programme built on the lessons of the KSD and supports vertical integration and learning for low emission development at national and subnational level in Kenya, Philippines, South Africa and Vietnam (**V-LED**ⁱⁱⁱ). This programme which started in 2015 and runs until January 2019, is financed by the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the German Government.

The central theme of these programmes was and is to promote a dialogic approach to vertical coordination and horizontal exchanges to stimulate climate action. The KSD programme showed that fostering fruitful dialogues and transformative learning among a variety of actors was possible and can result in some expected – and some unexpected outcomes.

How to measure the fruitfulness of such dialogues is a challenge as measurement touches on intangible elements of learning and change and on local circumstances. Commonalities are difficult to carve in stone, but elements have emerged in the experiences of these programmes. The question that lies in front of us is thus, can "common but differentiated learning"^{iv} not only be facilitated on different levels of government, but also in four different countries in Asia and Africa? And what would be the commonalities among successful dialogues?

This paper presents preliminary reflections on the application of a dialogic approach and transformative learning in five countries. Its main objective is to share lessons and explore with the

participants of the Berlin Conference workshop what they would mean for multi-level climate governance.

Origins

Germany's experience through the Climate Dialogue (KSD) has shown benefits. The aim was to optimise the National Climate Initiative in terms of mobilisation, process optimisation and yes, communication. The ideal when designing this process^v was a dialogue between actors on different political levels but on equal footing. Although progressive approaches were used, from Theory U^{vi} to "Fail Forward!"^{vii} the overall hypothesis is quite simple: If you allow people to spend time together, to listen to and interact with each other in a constructive and meaningful way, you might experience the emergence of respect, understanding and maybe even trust; this can unlock climate action, as the examples presented below can begin to illustrate.

An interesting example of such a process is the International Conference on Climate Action (ICCA) organised by the KSD team. The ICCA, which took place in October 2015 in Hanover shortly before the CoP21 in Paris, saw a coming-together of international actors from national and local governments, as well as initiatives and activists. In the evening of the first day of the conference, climate activists came from the neighbouring (un) conference^{viii} to demonstrate in the halls of the ICCA venue, the Castle Herrenhausen (which recently served as a venue for Barack Obama and Dr. Angela Merkel). They were welcomed by the Lower Saxonian Ministry for Environment and the evening ended in a common conga line with participants of the conference. On the second day of the conference, German Environmental Minister Dr. Barbara Hendricks joined in chopping vegetables at a "Schnippelparty"^{ix} and welcomed Rob Hopkins on stage, founder of the Transition Town movement.^x These incidents were partly planned and partly initiated by the general atmosphere of the conference – but the very fact that they were not totally controllable (and therefore more authentic) helped to create trust. The *Hanover declaration* was co-created by a diverse range of participants in a carefully orchestrated series of workshops. The declaration was thereafter proudly presented by the German Ministry of Environment at the CoP21 and a funding line for grassroots initiatives is being discussed. This illustrates the potential power of vertical dialogues.

The climate grid (lock)

Vertical dialogues and horizontal exchanges are also called for outside of Germany. During the scoping missions for the V-LED project in South Africa, Kenya, the Philippines and Vietnam ministerial representatives highlighted vertical coordination as a key challenge to implement national climate change strategies at the subnational level. The main challenges expressed are ones of mandate, the multitude and hierarchy of plans and reporting demands.

Being multi-sectoral by nature, climate change is often mainstreamed into overarching integrated plans and/or into sectoral plans. This means that climate change response has to be acted upon across sectors and thus **coordinated horizontally**. In the climate regime, countries commit to nationally determined contributions, but climate action also needs to be taken at the local level through concrete changes (in air quality regulations, land use changes, drainage systems, sustainable building design, etc.). Thus, climate action has to be **coordinated vertically**. This can be seen as a grid (horizontal mainstreaming and vertical coordination for action) of actors, levels and processes.^{xi}

However, scarce are the occasions when the practical and simple day-to-day hurdles and successes of manoeuvring in this grid can be discussed between peers and between subnational and national actors. Within this horizontal and vertical grid, different professional bodies with different frames of reference need to interact. In particular at the city or municipal level, integrating climate mitigation and managing the climate impacts calls upon a multitude of disciplines.

Also, each of the V-LED countries specifically requested low-emission development to be considered alongside climate adaptation and risk management. This means that at least three distinct professional communities that do not often interact with each other – but are being officially called to do so since the 5th assessment report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) – are involved. "If we do not achieve building a shared understanding across the borders of stakeholders and sectors working on different aspects of essentially the same issues, we will remain in the silos that work in isolation, being weaker, or even undermining each other's efforts" (Hemmati, M and Rogers, F. 2015)^{xii}

In summary, this grid of governance is populated by different disciplines that work according to different timeframes and use different processes, tools and lingo. It is therefore essential to **create a space** for different actors to interact with different levels of governance, to combine their learning and contribute to a process of change. What would be the characteristics of this space from a dialogic perspective?

Reflections on conducting fruitful dialogues: the “how”, the “what” and the “who”

Through the experience of our dialogic programmes, we believe that it is important to allow space for the individual beliefs and collective norms to be in the room at the same time as technologies and systems discussions occur.

We identified a set of characteristics that helped us in creating a fruitful and meaningful dialogue. Although seemingly obvious, it is surprising how often they are not followed and therefore exchanges do not result in inclusiveness and the richness of disciplinary and political diversity can be lost. In order to effect a process of change through a dialogic approach, the careful preparation, moderation and navigation of events is paramount.

The HOW:

Creating space for actors of different levels who usually do not interact on a specific theme:

While ‘space’ implies a set room and time, it is also meant metaphorically, e.g. through the language applied. As different communities such as urban planners, engineers, economists, bankers, politicians, managers and lay people speak different ‘languages’ and use different terms we need to create the conditions for a common ground to emerge, onto which every party can safely set foot. This is especially true, if you ask your audience to talk about what has not worked so well, such as in the Fail Forward! format (developed by Ashley Good).^{xiii}

Set principles: The power of creating the right atmosphere in a space is often untapped. In a climate cooperation world that is marred with workshop fatigue, creating a space in which a common vision is reached through differentiated learning paths is in itself a challenge. The vertically integrated NAMA (V-NAMA)^{xiv} project identifies “institutional congestion” and “superiority-inferiority complex” as existing realities to reckon with. Respect for each party is paramount. Without the attempt to **meet on equal footing** the different parties are not likely to willingly invest their time, energy and resources. This could be done by providing enough speaking time for each party, an appreciation of the common work done, for example by making sure that their input is considered into the further processes. “Participation breeds ownership”, as former KSD lead Minu Hemmati often quoted.

Sequencing: The events should not be a one off but a series of carefully designed events. In the Philippines, at the beginning of this year two events were intentionally designed to take place in sequence: A horizontal good practice exchange and a vertical dialogue. The theme was the implementation of the INDC and in particular the solid waste management sector. The horizontal good practice event gathered more than 25 representatives from Local Government Units^{xv}, who presented and discussed their successes and challenges. The following event was a vertical dialogue in which the national level presented their plans for the implementation of the INDC in the solid waste sector and the Local Government Units – based on their exchange shortly before – their existing work, plus their ideas for streamlining national implementation and support from the national level.

Providing means and convening power to bring different levels around a common table. The convening power seems to be key in allowing professionals and active citizens from different backgrounds to gather around a specific theme; however it can also give a sense of entitlement which can undermine the atmosphere of equal footing.

Creating a commonality emanating from diversity is at the core of the process. For lack of a better term, we called the rare occasions when shared realisations emerged and the dialogue became fruitful a “V-LED moment”. From our observations and interpretations these moments happened,

- when the representatives from different parties were actually sharing each other’s presence,
- when misunderstanding was unlocked, e.g. mandates were clarified, resources redirected or provided (time, personnel, money) to unblock barriers and the social construct blocking engagement was reduced,



- when bridges were being built between actors that usually don't talk to each other,
- when understanding emerged, and
- when the individual visions gave way to a common vision;

Language matters: The agenda 2030, the Paris agreement, the Sendai framework of action, the New Urban Agenda are some of the leading different agendas that have been negotiated by national governments and are to be implemented by sub-national actors. The translation of these international agendas into what matters to different levels is key, and for this language matters. The process of finding the convergence between different agendas to set common priorities might, we argue, be more realistic than integrating all in all. The aim here is for actors across levels to relate to the common priority.

The WHAT:

Previously, we stated that the individual and collective elements should be allowed space in a dialogue. Choosing the theme of a dialogue event for vertical coordination can either include or exclude people de facto. For example, mainstreaming climate change into planning processes might deter renewable energy promoters simply because they cannot identify themselves with the thematic language. Different levels of governance often tackle issues within the collective norms and topics of that level, for instance municipalities are concerned with public service delivery (e.g. water, electricity), whereas the national level with national fiscal balance. Confronting the norms (organisational culture, disciplines, topics, etc.) of different levels and professions whilst ensuring that participants interact on an equal footing, needs a careful selection of a topic. The aim is to “**develop willingness and abilities to collaborate**” (Hemmati and Rogers 2015).^{xvi}

On top of thematic issues, it is essential to tackle the pragmatic issues, the simple day to day realities that hamper or block processes. Some examples we have come across both in Germany and in the V-LED countries are:

Building on existing day-to-day work and existing cycles:

- Subnational actors need the financial means to act. Local government might be mandated to implement (inter)national agendas, but are they given the means to? Being in step with the national budget allocation and subnational budget formulation processes is crucial as is giving **attention to existing institutional day to day concerns.**
- Which ones of the existing reporting demands should local governments prioritise? The global agendas are often vested in different ministries who develop their plans of action and reporting requirements. The national level – in particular in sectoral ministries – is not always aware of the other **planning and reporting demands that the subnational level** needs to comply with. The World Bank study “Vietnam Urban Green Growth: A Strategic Review” published in 2015 highlights the struggle of provincial authorities to priorities, implement and report on the diverse strategic plans.
- The organisational culture, the existing type of coordination, performance measurement exerted in a particular institution will have a tremendous effect on the day to day priorities by the civil servants. When tackling vertical coordination of policy processes, it is also important to understand the management structure of the institution.

The WHO:

Climate managers are drivers of coordination:

The creation of the position of Climate Managers is one of the successes of the German national climate initiative. However, these positions are new, and in many countries such as Germany and the Philippines, these positions are impermanent.

The NKI conducted a needs assessment of these climate managers, they required “soft skills” such as process management, dialogue creation and coordination. As a consequence, the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research Heidelberg (ifeu) developed a Change Agent Training Programme for Climate Protection Managers (CPM) working in German municipalities. This request was echoed in the V-LED countries of Vietnam and South Africa.

Talking *with* and not *about* the other levels:

It is common to include representatives of groups, for example in the Philippines it would be the League of Local Governments, in South Africa SALGA. These are incredibly important institutions. However, it is also important to invite actual local government staff and give them a voice in national processes.

Unusual actors:

It is rare to bring in wild cards into a dialogue, several people who are not used to being invited to workshops, who don't usually engage with governmental processes, bringing the voice of a completely different perspective can bring surprises and unexpected solutions, when done in a setting of trust and respect. These might also be said of unusual constellations of actors, such as the trio of representatives from a civil society association, a company and a local government from Freiburg, who had successfully worked and later on presented together at a KSD event titled "Change through diversity" (*Wandel durch Vielfalt*).

Meeting in the middle ground:

Civil society and other major groups including the local authority major group do not often have space to have a meaningful involvement in governmental processes. The intention is there, many large national programmes and initiatives intend to be participative in the duration of their implementation, and global processes such as the Sustainable Development Goal formulation have opened up many (online) opportunities for involvement (e.g. "The future we want" process) – however, participating and being meaningfully involved in a process represent a broad spectrum.

Could a dialogue process be a meeting in the middle ground? On equal footing?

In Kenya, the community organisation, Kwale County Natural Resource Network partook in the revision of two important bills that the county government was to adopt - quarrying and solid waste – which would be ideal topics to bring together community members, county government and national representatives in a multi-level dialogue process.

Outlook:

The V-LED project has the promising opportunity to accompany, observe and support multi-level governance at a unique time. After the Sendai framework and the Paris agreement, when countries formulate how the Nationally Determined Contributions will be implemented and the agenda 2030 monitored, we would like to capture and observe how local climate action will be institutionalised across levels of governance.

What types of coordination between national and subnational actors enable local climate action (LCA) and low emission development (LED); which other factors support local climate action? These are the two main questions we are tackling within the remaining three years of the V-LED project. We kindly like to ask you, as readers, to suggest ways we could frame this opportunity so that it may serve for your frameworks and questions as political scientists, researchers and practitioners of the Berlin Conference and beyond.



- ⁱ FISCHER, Kaj, ANDREAS, Marcus Andreas, BAUER, Helmut, BICHLER, Marian, HEMMATI, Minu and HERTLE, Hans 2014: Climate Dialogue – Process-management as a Planning Tool. Process optimisation, mobilisation, and communication in local climate action. Bonn: ICLEI
- ⁱⁱ The website of the International Conference on Climate Action: Local Governments Driving Transformation (ICCA2015) features the Declaration in four languages: <https://icca2015.org>
- ⁱⁱⁱ The V-LED project website is www.localclimateaction.org
- ^{iv} FISCHER, Kaj, ANDREAS, Marcus & HEMMATI, Minu 2015: On climate action, cities need a way to learn from each other's mistakes. In *Citiscope*: <http://citiscope.org/habitatIII/commentary/2015/11/climate-action-cities-need-way-learn-each-others-mistakes#sthash.KrmABFUj.dpuf>
- ^v Led by Dr. Minu Hemmati
- ^{vi} A brief description can be found here: Presencing Institute, Introduction to Theory U, <https://www.presencing.com/theoryu>
- ^{vii} Find a description of the Fail Forward modules here: <https://failforward.org/>
- ^{viii} This alternative gathering tried to bring participants together and foster the participation of all as speakers. Find more details here: <http://www.conventioncamp.de/about-conventioncamp>
- ^{ix} A Schnippelparty is a gathering to prepare a meal solely using produce that are regularly treated as waste by super markets because of its appearance.
- ^x Read his full report here: HOPKINS, Rob 2015. Hannover: City of Possibilities. In *Transition Culture*: <https://www.transitionnetwork.org/blogs/rob-hopkins/2015-10/hannover-city-possibilities>
- ^{xi} Compare to JÄNICKE, Martin 2013. *Accelerators of Global Energy Transition: Horizontal and Vertical Reinforcement in Multi-Level Climate Governance. IASS Working Paper*. http://www.polsoz.fu-berlin.de/polwiss/forschung/systeme/ffu/files/working_paper_accelerators_of_global_energy_transition_4.pdf
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- ^{xiv} Vertically integrated National Appropriate Mitigation Actions <https://www.international-climate-initiative.com/en/projects/projects/details/135/> accessed 13.5.16
- ^{xv} Local Government Units are the political unit that in other countries is called municipality.
- ^{xvi} Hemmati, M and Rogers, F. (2015) Multi-Stakeholder Engagement and Communication for Sustainability, Beyond Sweet-Talk And Blanket Criticism: Towards Successful Implementation, CatalySD Communication, June 2015

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