

# Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries

River Dialogue Experiences in  
**Enhancing Public Participation in  
Water Management**

Edited by Kati Kangur

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River Dialogue

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## Preface

This publication presents the results of the international research project – River Dialogue. From 2003 to 2004, the River Dialogue project aimed at identifying the best approaches to increase public participation in the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive, including preparation and implementation of river basin management plans. Based on discussions with a wide range of specialists, stakeholders and local citizens in the three European river basins, this publication presents recommendations on approaches for involving scientists on the one hand and the public on the other hand in water management decision and policy-making.

Water quality and quantity are vital for all of us. As water management decisions affect all parts of society, public participation is needed as a means of reaching the most considerate and applicable water management policies. Public participation is also a key component in the preparation and implementation of water management plans under the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD). Article 14 of the WFD stresses that public participation and information are important aspects of creating awareness of environmental issues, and can also help to increase acceptance and commitment towards intended water management plans.

In the River Dialogue project, Linköping University in Sweden, Free University, Amsterdam, Holland and an international nongovernmental organisation, Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation worked together aiming at identifying the best means of increasing public inclusiveness for implementing the EU Water Framework Directive. The project, practically, tested two innovative participatory methods of citizens' involvement – Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries. The focus groups and citizens' juries were organised in the diverse cultural and socio-economic contexts of Europe. The selected river basin case studies were the Motala Ström in Sweden, the Emajõgi River in Estonia, and IJsselmeer basin in the Netherlands.

Project results indicate that, carefully planned and in the presence of a favourable atmosphere, the Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries are successful approaches for increasing public empowerment and also involving the public in the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive and river basin management plans. The project was of

helpful for improving the communication of scientific information from scientists to water management practitioners and the public and will in turn increase the experts' and scientists' ability to learn local knowledge from the public.

This delivery indicates the results of the Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries carried out in Motala Ström, Emajõgi River and IJsselmeer basins. The first part of the delivery gives an overview on the theoretical approaches of using Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries in the field of policy oriented social sciences aiming at deliberative democracy. In the second part of the book, practical experience and results of the Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries in three socio-economically differing river areas of Emajõgi River, IJsselmeer and Motala Ström are presented and compared. The concluding chapter provides the reader with practical recommendations for public participation in water management, and insightful advice on utilizing the methods of Citizens' Juries and Focus Groups as part of the development and implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive.

The River Dialogue project has been kindly supported by the European Commission under the Fifth Framework Programme (1998–2002) and contributes to the implementation of the Key Action Raising Public Awareness within the Horizontal Programme Improving the Human Research Potential & the Socio-Economic Knowledge Base: Contract No. RPAM-2002-00057. Therefore, with this handbook the River Dialogue research team endeavours to contribute to the ongoing discussion between the scientists, decision-makers involved in managing European waters, and public understanding of the challenges of water use and protection.

Tartu, December 2004  
Kati Kangur

## Contributors

### **Linköping University, Department of Management and Economics**

Linköping University (LiU) has about 3,000 employees and 25,000 students. It is known for its interdisciplinary profile and innovation in teaching and research. LiU participated in 70 EU research projects during the Fourth Framework Programme and is participating in 22 in the Fifth. There are three Faculties at LiU, the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Technology, and the Faculty of Arts and Science. The Department of Management and Economics is part of both the Faculty of Technology and the Faculty of Arts and Science. The Department has about 150 employees including PhD students. Linköping University is known for its interdisciplinary profile and innovation in research.

LiU has conducted the Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries in the Swedish case study area, the Motala River Basin. The coordinator of the project, Prof Geoffrey Gooch is the author of the comparative analysis of the focus groups held in three case study areas of the project.

### **Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation**

Peipsi CTC is an international, non-governmental organization that works to promote sustainable development and cross-border cooperation in the border areas of the Baltic States and the New Independent States (NIS). Peipsi CTC has expertise in water and regional policy analysis with the focus on transboundary waters and cross-border cooperation; environmental information dissemination, communication and stakeholder participation. CTC works on conducting the assessment of the effectiveness of environmental information and communication strategies and systems for several transboundary basins in Europe and NIS countries. Peipsi CTC is a founding partner organization of the International Water Assessment Center working on water management issues on the pan-European level and it cooperates with the Council of Europe and the Baltic 21 Program. In Estonia, Peipsi CTC is responsible for preparing national guidelines for public consultation and participation planning within the Estonian River Basin Management Plan.

Peipsi CTC has conducted the Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries in the Estonian case study area, the Emajõgi River basin. A Master's Student at Tartu University, Kati Kangur, the editor of the delivery is also the author of the policy recommendations on the utilisation of the Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries.

### **Free University Amsterdam, Institute for Environmental Studies**

Being the oldest environmental research institute in the Netherlands, the Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) has built up considerable experience in dealing with the complexity of water-related issues. Its purpose is to contribute to the sustainability of society and the rehabilitation and preservation of the environment through academic and applied research. IVM addresses challenging environmental problems and has a record in developing both policy relevant and innovative solutions. Complex problems require an interdisciplinary approach. Hence, the IVM staff has a wide diversity of backgrounds varying from chemistry and ecology to economics and social sciences. The researchers at the Institute have two unifying features: their concern for the environment and their desire to undertake path-breaking, high quality work. IVM hosts the European Forum on Integrated Environmental Assessment and will be able to draw on the experience gathered in this forum.

In this project, the IVM team led by Dr Dave Huitema, conducted the Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries in the Holland case study area, the IJsselmeer basin.



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# Public participation in support of deliberative democracy

Dave Huitema

The River Dialogue project addresses public participation in environmental decision-making and studies whether it is possible that the citizens can take counsel together about what laws and policies they ought to pursue as a commonwealth unit. Public participation in decision-making is one of the methods for enhancing deliberative democracy. ‘Deliberative democracy’ offers an alternative to representative democracy, which is lamented for its lack of possibilities for serious discussion as the representative institutions are blamed mainly for ‘power trading’ and bargaining. Smith and Wales (2000: 53) write: *‘At its heart, a deliberative polity promotes political dialogue aimed at mutual understanding, which “does not mean that people will agree, but rather that they will be motivated to resolve conflicts by argument rather than other means.”’* Hence, what is fundamental to democratic dialogue is “deliberative”, as opposed to “strategic” or “instrumental” rationality. Renn and Tyroller (2003), in their paper to the River Dialogue team write: *‘For a discussion to be called deliberative it is essential that it relies on mutual exchange of arguments and reflections rather than decision-making based on the status of the participants, sublime strategies of persuasion, or social-political pressure. Deliberative processes should include a debate about the relative weight of each argument and a transparent procedure for balancing pros and cons (Tuler and Webler 1999). In addition, deliberative processes should be governed by the established rules of a rational discourse.’*

## The advantages of deliberative democracy

Deliberative democrats reject the idea of a predetermined individual will, but rather focus on the process of the formation of a will, which they assume occurs in deliberative processes. The three advantages of deliberative democracy over representative democracy are: inclusiveness (it is not just politicians and technocrats that decide), deliberation (discussion and not power trading), and citizenship (developing opinions and preferences rather than assuming them predetermined). In many cases, citizens’ juries are often described as a supplement to representative democracy (see e.g. Kuper, 1996). In many cases, the outcomes of a jury are communicated to representative institutions and thereby fulfil a complementary role in the decision process.

## Transforming values to become politically more active

Most proponents of deliberative democracy consider it important that public decisions are based on reason and dialogue rather than interests, bargaining power, or (purely) on scientific expertise. In an institutional sense, deliberative democracy is often associated with direct democracy, self-governance and decision making at the local level. For those who see deliberative democracy in this way, deliberative democracy is an alternative to either representative democracy, to decision-making in the market, the courts, and/or



centralized bureaucracies. In this light, focus groups and citizens' juries are seen as method that not necessarily includes every stakeholder, but helps to improve the perception of an inclusive decision process. The deliberation is expected to lead to changes in attitude amongst the jurors, to transform values, learn from each other's experiences and knowledge, and to lessen the bounded rationality of the decision makers by filling in knowledge gaps. In terms of citizenship, it is expected that participants in a jury or focus groups will show more civic activeness, and become politically active.

Although the precise relation between deliberative democracy and the Citizens' Jury and Focus Groups is not that straightforward, we will just treat these methods as practical ways of establishing (a greater degree of) deliberative democracy. The table below (adapted from Coenen, Huitema and Woltjer, 2002) places the Citizens' Jury and Focus Groups in the context of other participatory methods.

### Purpose of participation and methods

Contributing to the quality of decision making		Articulating the interests of the different stakeholders	
Policy-based	Community-based	Homogenous stakeholder groups	Diverse stakeholder groups
Seeking informed views of citizens	Monitoring and appraisal by citizens	Involving communities of locality and interest	Bringing stakeholders together
Citizens' jury Consensus conferencing Focus groups Deliberative opinion poll Citizens' panel Referendum Teledemocracy	Community needs Analysis Priority search Public scrutiny Village appraisal Parish mapping Community indicators	Involving communities of locality Local Agenda 21 Involving communities of concern	Public meetings Planning for real mediation Consensus-building Future search Community visioning Round tables

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## Focus Groups Methodology

Geoffrey Gooch, Kati Kangur

Focus Groups are, as yet, still a rather unknown research tool within environmental science. However, the method is being developed in more and more studies and has shown itself to be useful within a row of scientific fields. This chapter aims to provide a short description of how the method is applicable and which problems and benefits can result from the decision to use focus groups.

Focus Groups are widely defined as groups that have been designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. In a relaxed atmosphere a group of six to eight people share their ideas and perceptions. The group members influence each other by responding to the ideas and comments of others. Focus Groups can provide a method suitable for getting a brief understanding of an area not previously covered. By conducting Focus Groups within a possible field of interest, the researcher can gain insights, which may help to generate ideas on how to conduct continued research in the field (Wibeck 2000, Morgan 1993).

### History of Focus Groups: from market research to enhancing public participation in decision-making

The focus groups' method was used for the first time in social science research in the 1920's through different forms of group interviews. During the 1930's and 1940's, Robert Merton and Paul Lazarsfeld from Columbia University, used the method to develop propaganda materials for the home front in the USA. From the 1950's to the 1980's, the method was partly forgotten and used only in market research. During the 1980's, some studies were published that used focus groups as a method for more academic social science research. Today, the method is used in such diverse fields as sociology, health studies, marketing, political science, geography, education, nursing and psychology. The two leading advocates for the method during this period are Richard Krueger, University of Minnesota, and David Morgan, Portland State University.

Krueger's Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research and Morgan's Focus Groups as Qualitative Research are regarded by many as the two most important books currently in the field.

## Planning and preparation of Focus Groups

Preparation, and early consideration of possible problems, is a precondition for successfully completing focus groups. In a more structured focus group, the moderator follows the **interview guide** and the participants are asked to react to the questions given. In an unstructured focus group, the moderator leaves the development of the discussion to the participants and only slightly controls the discussion. Krueger (1993) suggest moderators to lead participants deeper into the field of interest through the opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and finishing questions. It is very important that questions in the interview guide are given sufficient consideration and reconsideration in the progress of conducting focus groups.

In **recruiting** the focus groups, it is important that the researchers keep the project's purpose in mind. Most articles and books claim that the number of participants in the focus groups should be between 4-10 (Krueger 1994, Morgan 1997, Wibeck 2000). Within a smaller group, the participants usually feel that they have a larger influence on the discussion and therefore a closer connection to the discussion. Also, it is usually easier to tempt reticent participants into talking in a smaller group.

Focus groups are mainly used to get a sense of a field. The total selection of participants for the projects focus groups is usually too few to create statistical valid material, which removes the need for a random selection (Morgan 1997). People with a shared knowledge base will be more inclined to share their opinions with each other (Krueger 1994, Morgan 1997, Wibeck 2000). If the group is too heterogeneous, participants may have problems relating to each other, and therefore be reluctant to open up in a discussion. It is easier to recruit participants from already existing groups. Also, it will be easier to get a discussion going because they already know each other. Therefore, it is reasonable to use the leaders of the interest group as contact persons. Furthermore, participants are likely to show up if somebody they personally know asks them (Krueger 1994, Morgan 1997, Wibeck 2000).

## Conducting Focus Groups: balancing a relaxed atmosphere and moderator guidance

**Safe and relaxed** surroundings are a precondition for natural conversation and focus groups discussions. In that way, the participants will all obtain a good view of each other, which enables eye contact and creates a friendly environment. The moderator and the assistant should avoid placing themselves in any way that gives the group the impression that they will lead the discussion.

After welcoming the participants, in the beginning of the focus groups the moderator briefly explains the procedure of the focus group and the role of the moderator and assistant. Before the moderator really starts off the discussion with the first question,

it is important to have the participants say their name and, for example, what they like to do in their spare-time. This will facilitate the formulation of a more relaxed atmosphere for further discussion. Participants may be willing to try to compete with the other participants by revealing the researchers even more detailed information than they might have done in the case of face-to-face in-depth interview. Furthermore, as the participants themselves are largely guiding the discussion, they might come up with a completely new approach to an issue, and doing so become a very insightful source of information for the research.

**The moderator** should be there to help the focus group participants through the discussion on the chosen topic. The moderator should also try to keep all the participants involved in the discussion. It is important to avoid the group interview type of situation where the existence of an interview guide is apparent or when the participants at times turn to the moderator when discussing an issue, or to ask a question. The **assistant** is, together with the moderator, the only person from the research group that should attend the focus groups. The assistant's role is to support the moderator by making notes from the discussion, for example, in what order different people speak, and their body language.

The **number of the focus groups** needed depends on the purpose of the project. During the process of conducting focus groups, after a while the same arguments will be repeated and the researcher can almost predict what is going to be said. This situation of "saturation" is a sign for researchers that there is no need to conduct additional focus groups.

## From data collection to data analysis

In order to get a good overview of the focus groups, the tape-recorded material will be transcribed. Transforming the spoken contents of a tape to written form will never be able to capture all of the subtle communication that goes into a focus group. The level of detail in the transcription is determined by the need for details in the project analysis. Detailed assistant notes will help transcribing with connecting voices and arguments to names and thereby save valuable time.

Researchers should always be careful with their own earlier formed opinions on the research material. The purpose of the study leads the researcher to ask participants of focus groups to discuss a certain topic and it would therefore be unwise to not use the same approach in the analysis.

Going through the material and **coding** the citations into sub-categories is the first thing to do to get an overview of gathered information. The point of doing sub-categorization is to give the researcher an overview of the data and help him in the search for trends and patterns. In a wide definition, this embraces the idea of discourse analysis - what, how and in what context it is said.

To gather the categorization into conclusions it is useful to apply the **long-table approach**. The transcripts are cut up along the dialog coded lines and divided up onto a long table. The groups of categorized coded dialog citation were then used to find patterns where-from conclusions could be drawn. In today's world of technology,

computer programs can help the researcher in this stage, but the approach is still very helpful (Krueger 1994).

## Putting together the conclusions

Any conclusion will have to have a background in the material, which can be traced and valued by another outside researcher. So after using the long-table approach the researcher should go through each focus group and make a summary of the opinions expressed about the main areas of interest for the project. These summaries are then used in comparison to each other and patterns and differences are noted down. Four common factors that help the researcher to decide on how much weight or emphasis to give comments or themes are their frequency, specificity, emotion and extensiveness (Krueger 1994). When writing up a report the structure depends heavily on the context in which the report is expected to be used.. It is also advisable to have citations as examples of the conclusions that are made and that the report tries to give an accurate picture over how the research team came to their conclusions.

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consultation with the organizers. Several authors (Stewart, Kendall and Coote, 1996) suggest that the questions should not be too simple, as they are boring for the jurors. The character of the charge should be more open. The questions that allow answers "Yes" or "No" should be avoided.

## Searching for the jury members

Jury consists of 12-24 members. Larger juries are usually split up in smaller groups to answer different questions. The advantages of doing so seem to be (1) a greater number of issues can be addressed as the jury works more efficiently, (2) people feel more comfortable in small groups and shy people therefore start talking sooner. The disadvantages are said to be as follows: (1) small groups contain lesser people, with differing opinions and perspectives, and therefore offer less opportunity to learn (2) various issues can not be meaningfully discussed by the group as a whole after they have been in a smaller group already.

The sources from which jurors are selected differ. The election register and telephone directory are most often used. Sometimes newspaper ads are used instead.

As for the **number of jurors** to approach, it needs to be taken into account that the willingness to participate differs strongly. Renn and Tyroller (2003) report a willingness to participate in citizens' forums varying from 5 to 40%. The participation in the juries depends (1) on the duration of the jury: the longer the jury, the greater the time investment needed from the jurors; (2) the amount of money offered to participate: not paying jurors results in more older people, more people with flexible work schedules and more people close to the location of the meeting.

The importance of the **representativeness** of the jury depends on the salience of the issues in wider politics. The more decisive the affairs the more necessary it is to cover all the segments of the population. The fact that the perception of the jury by the public is important, and that a diverse background of jurors might help enrich the debate within the jury. The experiences elsewhere teach us that "overrepresentation" is likely to occur among the following group: males, elderly people and the highly educated.

## Conducting the juries

During the jury, much is made of the experience and neutrality of the moderators. The moderator's reactions to jurors' opinions can already show subtle signs of disagreement and this needs to be prevented.

IPPR (1996) suggests that the **witnesses** are professionals and experts in their field of work. The maximum number of witnesses is 4 a day. They speak for 15 minutes and then 45 minutes of discussion will follow. Witnesses must not be paid because their independence will be called into question.

Renn and Tyroller (2003) advise that people tend to reason rather intuitively initially and not reflect upon the values and norms that guide their lines of reasoning. These authors suggest letting jury discussions play out for some time, but to intervene at a certain point in the process by asking people to specify reasons for their positions and quantify

preferences. Therefore, it is reasonable to work topic-wise through recommendations and immediately start discussions. The moderator might help people to systematically summarize their opinions and recommendations. Renn and Tyroller (2003) indicate that the jurors should collectively discuss, at the beginning of their deliberations, what is the preferred procedure to arrive at final recommendations.

**The jury report** – quite a lengthy document is the main instrument for communicating the outcomes of the jury and is usually written by the organisers of the jury, but approved by all jurors. It is the basis for further contact with the commissioning body and can serve as the basis for a presentation in relevant institutions. An oversight committee of recommendations with representatives from stakeholders, government, and scientists is necessary to anchor the instrument of the citizen's jury.

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## Focus Groups in Motala Ström

Geoffrey Gooch, Gabriella Jansson, Rickard Mikaelsson

Findings from Motala Ström Focus Groups will be presented by looking at the content analysis of the interview data as well as the observations made during the Focus Groups. In the river basin area of Motala Ström, Focus Groups were carried out with two groups of ordinary citizens, sailors, farmers, fishermen, non-elected officials from the local authorities and nature conservation representatives. In total, 56 people participated in the Focus Groups, with each one consisting of 5-9 participants. The selection was not random, but deliberate as the groups were selected from existing networks of fishing societies, sailing societies, etc. Contact people, gathering the groups, were usually given an answer that people were too busy and that they did not want another burden by taking part in these groups. This could originate in the fact that the people did not feel directly affected by the water management issue.

### Focus Groups' results

When discussing the **environment**, most groups appeared to be happy with their local environment and described it as “fantastic”, “varied” and “privileged”. Also negative aspects, for instance, the smell of the industries and fertilizers from the surrounding farms, were mentioned. Yet, several participants did not perceive the environmental problems in the region as great, particularly when compared to what they had been.

An ambiguous attitude towards **water and water management** was specifically noticeable among the participants who did not feel directly affected by water issues: they seemed to take the issue for granted and partly blamed this on the fact that water issues did not get much attention in general, such as in the media. There seemed to be general confusion with regards to what water management actually involves: management, institutions, owning water etc. Fishermen pointed out the prioritising of financial interests rather than the environment. Several participants among fishermen and farmers associated water management with an over regulation of water.

The **Water Framework Directive** will make the EU even more present and visible in Swedish water management and this was indicated in most of the Focus Groups. The attitude towards the EU is embodied partly in a certain suspiciousness and scepticism – as something, which complicates environmental work. On the other hand, many participants emphasised the fact that Sweden alone cannot manage its waters but that cooperation amongst countries is needed and that, in this respect, the EU plays an important role.

Many participants experienced the **media's coverage of water** as too selective and one sided; that it highlighted mainly negative aspects, since these create headlines, neglecting the positive aspects. Though it was pointed out many times that the media is an important source creating views on nature and water management. Several participants highlighted the importance of writing articles in a simpler, more understandable way, which in turn can lead to people being encouraged to find out more.

As for the **involvement of the public in water management**, in general, ordinary citizens lack the interest about what they could do to get more involved in water management. It was mentioned by some participants in these groups that there is an endless list of things one can try to influence and get involved in, and it is not self-evident that water issues are on top of that list. The groups of farmers, fishermen and nature conservationists had more experience with regards to influencing water management and also seemed far more eager to get involved to a higher extent.

The participants in many Focus Groups indicated that it is important to inform ordinary citizens more about what can be done with regards to water issues, not only in terms of influencing water management but also in terms of individually handling and taking care of the water. Some stressed the importance of communicating understandable information to the public in order to raise the awareness of and interest in water issues.



## Process aspects of the Focus Groups

One of the most important aspects with regards to studying the **behaviour of the participants** was to get an impression of how interesting and valid the group considered issues related to water management to be. With regards to eventual silent or dominant participants in the eight Focus Groups, a majority of the group discussion seemed to involve, more or less, most participants.

Observing the **body language** of the participants, when they expressed their viewpoint, can serve as an indication of their interest in the issues under discussion. The two groups consisting of ordinary citizens did not appear to feel strongly for the topics discussed – both groups had close to indifferent body language. In contrast, the groups consisting of local government officials, farmers, nature conservationists and fishermen all seemed to express an interest in issues related to water management. This seemed to originate in the fact that the fishermen often felt that they were overrun by the authorities with regards to various water issues.

The **atmosphere** in most groups can be described as relaxed and informal, as between friends discussing an issue. Investigating if the participants felt willing or reluctant to discuss the topics in question was deemed important for evaluating the possibility of making Focus Groups a more established method for involving the public.

In terms of the **group interaction** during the Focus Groups, the general impression of most of the participants was that they were on a more or less equal footing with each other. In two of the groups there were, however, indications of one or two participants being the informal leaders of the group. These participants tended to speak more than the others and sometimes displayed a greater knowledge of issues. The fact that the groups were homogenous, thus consisting of participants with more or less shared views and interests with regards to water related issues, obviously contributed to the opinions being similar. Appearance of less diverging opinions could also depend on the lack of a greater interest in water management in general amongst some groups.

Most of the groups had to be **moderated** more than initially intended. This meant that follow-up questions or clarifications of a question had to be added to the original format of questions in order to keep the discussion going. Moderating was also needed for engaging more silent participants or for interrupting overly talkative participants.

## Focus Groups from the participants' point of view

The questionnaire, presented to the participants of the Focus Groups, aimed to gather thoughts on the Focus Groups from the participant's point of view.

Many of the participants seemed to have merely a vague idea of what taking part in a Focus Group actually would involve. A common answer was thus that the participants did not have any specific **expectations**, since they did not really know what participating in this activity would entail.

The groups that involved participants who had various degrees of **knowledge** of water issues seemed to indicate that the less knowledgeable participants with regards to water issues felt that they had learnt from the more knowledgeable participants. Most

participants seem to have felt that they were able to discuss the issues that they found important to a high degree. In this respect, the size of the group did not seem to matter. However, obviously, several participants also meant that they had expressed issues of importance to a lower or very low degree.

Even though most participants seem to have been satisfied with the aspects under discussion, several, nevertheless, mentioned topics that could have been discussed but were not. It would have been interesting **to discuss more** local questions with regards to the environment and water, as well as how one can act locally. Other participants also meant that the discussion could have been given more depth regarding water issues, but that the limited amount of time made this difficult.

Most of the reactions were very positive in terms of overall impression of the focus group meeting. Many of the participants found the group discussions “interesting”, “fun” and “rewarding”. Several also pointed out that they found the atmosphere relaxing and that it allowed everyone to air their opinions. A few participants had more negative comments. In the group of water recreation interests, two of the participants meant that the discussion was a little “fuzzy” and that there was too little steering.

Many participants expressed their interest to participate again in the Focus Groups meaning that it is fun to discuss with other people and to hear other people’s opinions. Other comments referred to the fact that the participants felt that they had learnt something from the discussion and that it is always positive to gain new insights, which once again illustrates that some participants experienced that the Focus Groups increased their understanding of the issues under discussion.



## Focus Groups in Emajõgi River Basin

Kati Kangur

In May to June 2003, Peipsi Centre for Transboundary Cooperation conducted 9 Focus Groups with environmentalists, schoolchildren, owners of the recreation homes, fishermen, farmers, bureaucrats from local authorities, water recreation groups, NGOs and with people from a canoeing centre. The Focus Group discussions concentrated on water management issues in the Emajõgi River basin, paying special attention to the environmental problems, its coverage in Estonian media, public awareness building and stakeholders' opportunities to contribute in water management and also the effect of the EU on Estonian water issues.

Focus Groups were gathered mostly using the existing networks of interest groups. Peipsi CTC research team also used the meetings of fishermen, NGO representatives, farmers and schoolchildren as the Focus Groups' discussion sites. People's initial reaction, when they were invited to participate in the Focus Groups, was rather positive as they appreciated the interest in their opinion on the water management as well as because of the fascinating format of focus groups.

### Focus Groups' findings

Focus Groups participants' **views on the environment** did not differ to a large extent. It was stressed by schoolchildren, representatives of NGOs and local authorities, as well as fishermen, that water resources and their management earn too little attention especially in the rural areas. Though, all groups reached the conclusion that the environmental conditions in general, as well as water quality, has improved in the Emajõgi River as the wastewaters of Tartu and its industries have been processed, and the Soviet-time extensive use of fertilisers in agriculture has ceased.

Throughout the Focus Groups, contradicting views appeared on whether to allow **human interference** on making **natural areas** more visitor-friendly or to leave them untouched. Common understanding in local authorities representatives', fishermen's,

farmers', as well as water recreation entrepreneurs' groups, was that poorly developed infrastructure hinders the realization of environmental friendly ideas. They indicated that, for instance, lack of trash bins, camping- and parking-, landing sites on the river shore do not leave people much other choice but to ruin the nature, if they want to enjoy it one way or the other.

The common opinion throughout the Focus Groups was that environmental issues, as well as problems concerning **water management**, are decided in inviolable spheres of power. The recreation homes, nature conservationists, water recreation entrepreneurs, as well as fishermen held this opinion particularly strongly and stressed it by giving numerous examples from personal experiences. They indicated particularly that there is a lack of knowledge about to whom to turn to with water related problems.

All Focus Groups indicated their scepticism on **nature conservation institutions** and ineffective state bureaucracy as well as European Union directives. In particular, the European Union directives driven nature protection institutions were blamed for setting thoughtless boundaries on fishing, agriculture – traditional and well-proven ways of making income for the people living on the Emajõgi River shore. The farmers and the owners of the recreation homes stressed that farmers doing traditional ecologically necessary, but non-profitable, jobs should be supported financially while taking care of water-meadows, natural water purification systems and fish spawning areas. On the other hand, fishermen and representatives of water sports, as well as water recreation entrepreneurs, emphasised that the lack of proper institutionalisation hinders the development of the recreational infrastructure on the river and its shore. It came out that poorly regulated water-transportation is a threat to the ecosystem of the Emajõgi River and to the fishermen and swimmers. But, at the same time, it prevents the overgrowing of the water-body. Nevertheless, all Focus Groups acknowledged the positive effect of the financial help from the European Union Structural Funds on the development of the water treatment systems.

It appeared in most of the groups that water management is a complex problem that can be solved only by taking into account environmental as well as socio-economic conditions. Schoolchildren, fishermen, farmers, local authorities representatives and recreation home owners indicated that intensive fishing, also rapacious fishing is caused by the high unemployment rate in the rural areas of Emajõgi River Basin.

Focus Groups showed that the Estonian **media** does not pay much attention to water issues. It functions as a chronicle for mostly negatively associated happenings, instead of raising public awareness of the sustainable use of water-resources. It was said in many meetings that more newspaper space and airtime should be dedicated to the dissemination of the ideas concerning environmentally sustainable behaviour.

NGO activists, as well as the schoolchildren, showed their enthusiasm that through the Focus Groups they had found a vital issue that can be **influenced** respectively through the village movement or incorporated to the school activities. Furthermore, all Focus Groups emphasised that the public awareness raising on sustainable use of water resources should begin already at the primary school level. The participants, in most of the Focus Groups gathered in Emajõgi River basin, were of the opinion that convincing delicately different stakeholders to make the difference in the use of water

would change the water management more effective.

**People's knowledge on nature** and environmental behaviour was considered low in Focus Groups. It takes time, great attention of the media and state support in order to improve the situation, indicated the Focus Groups. The knowledge of people, competent in water-related issues, should be presented in simple language and a friendly format, emphasising the positive side of what people gain by preserving nature, said the environmentalists, schoolchildren and village activists. Stakeholders' representatives welcomed the initiative to take their opinion and experiences into account in water management, whereas stressing that so far only central power and technical experts have been decisive in it. Recreation homeowners, as well as NGO-s' and local authorities' representatives, suggested that environmental information could be presented from a more positive angle: using less technical language and more illustrations from Estonian nature that the media followers could associate themselves with. It also turned out that environmental information is available, but people have to be really interested and have enough time in order to search and observe this.

### **Participants on the Focus Groups**

Fishermen were the most moved for the attention that was paid to their problems via Focus Groups. Most lively discussion and strong presentation of the personal viewpoints, as well as more need for moderation of the discussion, was seen in the farmers, fishermen and recreation homeowners' groups. These groups seemed to be also more involved with the water management problems in their everyday life. The atmosphere was polite and peaceful in the majority of Focus Groups; it was more uptight in the group discussions of public officials and the representatives of environmental organisations, probably as they are practically bound to the water management issues.





## Focusing on the IJsselmeer: Experiences from the Focus Groups in the Netherlands

Dave Huitema, Marleen van de Kerkhof, Maria van Tilburg

From May to June 2003, nine Focus Groups were held in the region of IJsselmeer, Netherlands. Focus Groups including farmers, fisherman, water recreation, nature conservation groups, house owners, public officials, in addition to three groups consisting of ordinary citizens, were carried out. The Focus Groups were planned to cover Friesland, Flevoland and Noord-Holland regions around Lake IJsselmeer. One citizens' group on each side and at least two agricultural groups were invited, as the water related problems for agricultural sphere differ around the lake. Certain groups (i.e. public officials, water recreation, nature conservation areas) were intended to draw participants from all sides of the lake.

When gathering the participants, the formation of an open, free and lively discussion group was borne in mind. Therefore, participants with fundamentally similar backgrounds, from similar professions were gathered. Focus Groups assembled were around 4 to 9 people due to lack of interest or by the fact that participants decided not to show up at the last minute. The research team approached the participants through the contact person, who knew the persons to ask and who were more inclined to agree to come.

The principal method to approach people was by phone. The reasons for willingness to participate were rather pragmatic: to learn about the coming Framework Directive; experience of participating in focus groups, or the meeting would have taken place anyway. The reasons for not participating include travelling distance, lack of time or interest. There was a relatively high willingness to participate, if the intermediary encountered the participants, as he knows whom to ask.



## Focus Groups results

The general conclusion that can be drawn from the IJsselmeer Focus Groups is that **water quality** is a topic of interest to all groups. Most of the times, good water quality is equated with transparent water and the absence of mosquitoes and algae. Nature conservationists are the only group that still sees that water quality should improve further. The fishermen see that the water is so clean that it already hinders the expansion of fish stock and plant growth. The citizens in Almere argue that the water quality is important only for the perspective of human uses.

**Water level** in the IJsselmeer and, more specifically, flood safety and the quality of the dikes generally were issues that did not automatically come up in the Focus Groups. This is a reflection of the more general attitude of the Dutch public that this issue is more or less under control. Even the citizens of the deepest situated city, Almere, consider the water level rising only a long-term problem.

As for the **views on nature**, in most Focus Groups the participants consider the IJsselmeer an important natural area. According to many groups, the attractiveness of the lake is found in its spaciousness and uniqueness on the national level. The members of most Focus Groups note that the economic developments and nature can go hand in hand in the lake. The farmers also indicate that part of the attractiveness of the lake is its manmade landscape and that continued agricultural business is a way to maintain it. In particular, the nature conservationists claim that housing, infrastructure and recreation prevail at the cost of nature.

**Water in the media** appeared to be less interesting topic for the IJsselmeer Focus Group. In the case of farmers and the fishermen, there was passionate discussion in media coverage with special emphasis on that their professions are blamed for practically every environmental problem that exists in the IJsselmeer area. In many meetings regrets were noted that the media rarely do extensive and in-depth coverage of topics and present a rather short-term view. Furthermore, it came out that the media could play a more extensive role in raising public awareness on the issues concerning IJsselmeer.

During the Focus groups – **institutions for water management**, on Dutch as well as European Union levels, were deliberated on. There was widespread support for the European role in water management. The reasons for that included: (1) The awareness that water in IJsselmeer comes from Rhine and is therefore strongly affected as to what other countries do with it; (2) the contention that responsibilities for water management in the Netherlands are spread over too many authorities; (3) support for the idea to have water policies at the river basin level; (4) the contention that many governments dealing with water management are rather susceptible to pressure from industries or economic interests and will not protect the qualities of the lake sufficiently. Despite the widespread support for a stronger European role in water management, the increasing role of the EU particularly seems to imply a loss in flexibility in the regulations, which is partly also to be blamed on a loss of local control over such regulations.

The issue of **regulation** is of interest to most Focus Groups, although the two citizens' groups were less passionate about the subject. Only in the nature conservationist group the idea prevailed that there is too little regulation in the IJsselmeer. The reason behind the impression that there are too many regulations on IJsselmeer is that too

little development is currently allowed. Most participants of the Focus Groups, even the public officials, warn that the IJsselmeer should not just be seen as a nature reserve, but that it is an area in which people must be able to make their living.

Most members of the Focus Groups, when asked about their involvement in water management interpreted the question as one about their influence on water management policies. Most people said they either had not, or too little, influence on water management. The relatively small influence that most Focus Groups see for themselves is attributed to lack of resolve, time or stamina to bring their opinions to the unaccountable water boards.

## Process aspects of the Focus Groups

Through social interaction, the participants collectively make sense of their individual experiences and beliefs. In order to evaluate the group processes in the IJsselmeer focus groups, the behaviour of the participants, the atmosphere of the group as well as the group interaction was observed.

**Groups** can be characterised by dominant and silent participants. In almost every group there was at least one dominant participant who mostly possessed a certain status in a group. It seemed that the other participants did not mind him dominating either. In most cases, if needed with a little stimulation from the moderator, the participants who were initially rather silent became more talkative in the course of the focus group meeting.

**Expression of the viewpoints** can be characterised by strong hesitant, emotional, indifferent and neutral ways. A number of groups expressed their viewpoints rather strongly. About all the groups showed an **interest in water management**, according to the moderator and assistant's observations. Also, the groups that expressed their viewpoints most strongly and emotionally – fishermen, nature conservation and public officials, are the groups that have the strongest interest in the water management issue.

In process observation, four dichotomies were taken into account in order to give an impression of the overall **atmosphere in the groups**. It concerns: relaxed versus tense; formal versus informal; open versus closed; lively versus neutral. Overall the atmosphere in the focus groups was relaxed, informal and open. Only in agricultural groups as well as the group with fishermen, the atmosphere was initially somewhat tense. The participants of these groups expressed their criticism about scientific research and policymaking process on water issues grounding it with the impression that the Habitat Directive and the Bird Directive are hindering their work.

The **group interaction** is evaluated on four aspects: group hierarchy, the extent to which the groups are divided in “camps” of opponents and supporters of specific viewpoints, the role of the moderator, and discussions focusing on concrete topics or doing side-discussions. There was a **hierarchy** in the groups of farmers from Friesland, the citizens from Friesland and the public officials as some participants professional status, social position, or their knowledge on the topic, gave a possibility to have more say on the issue.

In most groups, a certain degree of **moderating** was necessary, the reason behind this

was probably that the participants expected the moderator to guide the discussion as well as to keep the discussion focused and to stimulate the silent people to contribute to the discussion.

### Focus Groups through the eyes of participants

Although most of the participants were informed about the aim of the meetings, several participants indicated that they did not really know what to expect in the beginning of the Focus Group. Nevertheless these people who were interested in the topic to be discussed took part in the Focus Groups. Others expected to bring to the fore the problems with regard to water management as well as to acquire more information on the water management at large and the EU water framework directive.

The participants considered the Focus Groups open lively animated and less formal than **initially expected**. They appreciated the opportunity to express their own viewpoints on water management and to have a discussion with likeminded people. Other participants argued that they would have wanted some more guidance on the discussion.

A quarter of the participants gained a lot of **new information**, whereas 53 per cent of the people gained hardly any or no new insights into from the Focus Groups. Explanations for the moderate learning effect are probably the result of the composition of the groups: in some groups participants already knew each other and were familiar with each other's ideas and interests.

The majority of the participants (88%) said the Focus Groups had taken into account all the **topics that were relevant** to them. In particular, in the group with fishermen, farmers of Noord Holland, citizens of Almere, and the public officials, the participants argued that Focus Groups did not address any solutions to the water management problems in the IJsselmeer area or how to improve the implementation of EU Water Framework Directive.

The participants were rather positive about the Focus Group approach and would like **to participate again**, (79% would be willing to participate again). The main reason was that Focus Groups gave them the opportunity to bring certain problems to the attention of the policy makers and to have a possible impact on the policymaking process. 83% of the participants indicated that they were able to say most of what they considered important to the discussion. Main factors that played a role in this are the openness of the discussion, and the relatively small group size, as well as the moderator's endeavours to stimulate the silent participants to speak.



## Focus Groups from River Dialogue Perspective

Geoffrey Gooch

Focus Groups conducted in the frames of the River Dialogue project were based on the shared methodology. Though the approach of different research teams differed as some chose a more quantitative, others a more qualitative analysis strategy.

The River Dialogue research teams went through an extensive planning of the Focus Groups. The fact that the Focus Groups are a form of group interview involving the need to bring together several participants also means that they require a great deal of planning and more time than one initially might think (Morgan 1998, p.31). Thus, even though the group sessions provide the basis for the study, the main bulk of the work is done before and after the session. Morgan identifies four stages in the process of conducting Focus Groups: planning, recruitment, the conductance of the discussion and the analysis.

### Identification of the participants

When the research results reach a level of 'saturation', i.e. the level where no new knowledge is produced in conjunction with conducting more Focus Groups, it is deemed suitable not to continue the process (Morgan 1998). Having taken this point into consideration, the number of groups conducted in the River Dialogue case study areas differed from 7 to 11 in three countries involved in the study. All teams, however, conducted Focus Groups with constellations of ordinary citizens, boat owners, farmers, fishermen, non-elected officials from the local authorities and nature conservationists.

During the course of the recruitment process, as well as during the actual execution of the groups, it was decided that 4-7 people were suitable numbers for participants taking part in the Focus Groups. This mostly depended on the fact that in the initial groups it was indicated that groups of 4 to 7 participants were more manageable and

effective. The participants appeared more comfortable in a smaller group; they tended to talk more and the discussions became less divided.

Certain categories of participants were of particular interest to the research teams, and therefore the selection process was therefore not random but deliberate. The aim of the project was to obtain groups with an informal and intimate atmosphere, where the participants were willing to share their experiences with each other. In order to facilitate this, homogenous groups from already existing networks were created. Using existing networks greatly facilitated the recruiting process, as the chairman/woman took the responsibilities of contact person and by doing so increased the participants' sense of obligation to turn up at a meeting. Morgan (1998, p.33) notes that the recruitment of participants may be quite time consuming. Experiences from the recruitment process in the River Dialogue Focus Groups also demonstrate that the recruitment process was indeed very time-consuming.

### **The response of the participants**

The reactions of the people who were contacted with an offer to participate in a Focus Group were gathered in a database indicating how the participants were contacted; the reasons people gave for participating/not participating and how many participants eventually turned up. The first contacts with presumptive groups were taken by an e-mail directed at the contact person. In this mail, the aim of the project and the Focus Groups was briefly described. After that, most contact took place via the telephone. Since most contact with possible participants took place via a contact person, it is difficult to measure the reactions of all of the people contacted. Reactions were, however, partly registered in the form of questionnaires handed out after the sessions, although this of course only registered the reactions of the people who had eventually agreed to participate, and not of the large bulk of people who did not. One of the aspects that were documented in the database was the reason the contact people gave for declining the offer to participate. Though it was mostly considered as another "burden" that takes too much time. Furthermore, it was a challenge to find motivated people and make some groups see how they are related to the issue.

The questionnaire handed out to the participants after the group session, the following question was asked: What was your first reaction when you were contacted about this focus group? Many participants meant that it was a "fun", "exciting", "interesting", "different" and "important" thing to do. Several participants in all the case study areas meant that it was "about time" that a dialogue, with the affected "grass roots" in terms of water management, was initiated. Many contact persons agreed to participate only if they could decide date, time and the location of the group session. Morgan (1998) stresses the importance of regularly reminding the participants of the group session in order to make sure that they do eventually turn up. In terms of the River Dialogue Focus Groups, the contact person was reminded of the group via a letter sent out one week before the session. A final reminder was made in the form of a phone call a couple of days before the session in order to conduct a final check that everything was in order.

## **The formulation of questions**

The interview content for the River Dialogue Focus Groups for all three countries was determined during a workshop held in Sweden in April 2003. The interview content was created according to Krueger's (1998) template of five types of questions: opening questions, introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and finishing questions, and the content was determined in close correlation with the purpose of the Focus Groups, that is, distinguishing issues of importance with regards to water management and public participation. Since the aim was explorative, to discover the perspectives that the public has on issues related to water, the aim was to keep the interviews unstructured. By minimizing the involvement of the moderator, the participants were given the opportunity to pursue what interested them most (Morgan 1998, p.40). However, some focus groups required more moderating than others and thus became more structured. One or two articles about water issues taken from the local newspaper were used as a stimulus. The main purpose was to give examples of the coverage of water related issues in the media, and to let the participants reflect over and discuss how these issues were communicated. In some cases, however, the groups preferred to discuss content rather than the form of presentation.

## **Transcribing the Focus Group discussions**

Each group was - with the permission of the participants and the promise to keep the information confidential - recorded on tape and transcribed. As the main purpose of the River Dialogue Focus Groups was to identify issues of importance with regards to water management, public participation, and communication, the content the discussions was considered most important. In order to be able to distinguish which aspects might be more significant than others, the research team decided to document, for example, the intonation of the participants, agreeing noises from other participants in the group, laughter, interrupted sentences and pauses. Thus, in conjunction with the content, the interaction between the participants was registered in the transcriptions. In the transcriptions for the River Dialogue project representing the main contains of the dialog without being true to every single word, and pauses, unfinished sentences, sounds of hesitation and so on are also noted down. Furthermore, the moderator and the assistant discussed the interaction and behaviour of the participants after the group sessions. This was in turn documented in order to complement the written material with visual and personal impressions of the groups.





## Contents analysis and coding

The analysis of the transcribed material was conducted according to a qualitative content analysis. Unlike quantitative content analysis - where the researcher quantifies, i.e. counts the occurrence of certain phenomenon in the text (Bergström & Boréus 2000) – a qualitative content analysis is explorative, reflexive and interactive, with the researcher acting as the main tool of the analysis. The aim was to develop clear descriptions and analytical explanations that correlate to the data in question. Also some statistical generalisations were introduced in Focus Groups' analysis. Though, as the selection of participants was too small only loose generalisations, tendencies and patterns for groups of people, can be distinguished.

The first step in our analysis was to return to the purpose of the study and to make clear the aims of the analysis. In order to identify the categories and codes, an extensive and thorough reading of the text material is required. By doing this, one can discover, for instance, keywords, events and processes, which capture the core of the material. Within Focus Group analysis the basic codes are dictated by the interview content. Coding does not simply involve a reduction and simplification of the material, although this may be considered important at the beginning of the analysis in order to facilitate an overview of the material. Coding also involves “complicating” the material as it is used for developing, transforming and re-testing the researcher’s conceptions of the material. In these cases, the researcher has to look beyond the material, think creatively with the material, ask the material question and then generate conceptual frameworks (Coffey & Atkinson 1996). The obvious step during and after the coding is to interpret the data: providing the coded and categorized material with meaning.

In the River Dialogue project, the research teams used different programmes that fulfilled similar functions. The computer program ATLAS/ti, used by the Swedish team, helped considerably in obtaining an overview of the material and hence facilitating the analysis. Coding and categorization were first and foremost based on the main questions posed within the Focus Groups. Coding was developed successively. By relating the codes and categories, taken from the interview content, to the phase when the questions were answered or reoccurred in other parts of the discussion. The codes also stemmed from the participants’ own definitions of certain phenomenon. Furthermore, the word-count function in ATLAS/ti occasionally contributed by determining terms with the help of

a list of those words, which were mentioned most often in the text. The organisation of the data also involved the localization of text units that appeared to treat the same issues. Other subcategories were determined by the researchers' own summarizing explanations of what the participants appeared to say. In the River Dialogue case the codes generated from the interview content, and the breaking down of these general codes to more specific and detailed codes, however, not too detailed, only to fairly reflect and explain the codes. The content analysis was horizontal, i.e. aspects that reoccurred in most groups were accounted for. Every aspect was obviously not mentioned in all groups; certain aspects were sometimes discussed more in some group than in others. However, an interesting observation is that most of the groups discussed similar aspects. For instance, the nature conservationists experienced a many issues in a different way to the farmers. Group-specific aspects were therefore considered important to emphasize, although it should however be noted that the emphasis was on finding tendencies that most groups had in common. The content analysis also included so-called 'memoing', i.e. the ideas and interpretations, which in various ways connected the various codes and categories together, and thus gave them meaning and coherence, were noted (Punch 1998). These different components – codes and memos – were integrated into a graphical map, which provided an overview of the interpretation of the text, and internal relations between different categories and codes. The construction of these mental maps contributed to a more in-depth interpretation of the text units.

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## Swedish Citizens' Jury on Exploring the Future of the Motala Ströms River Basin Area

Geoffrey Gooch, Catharina Linderoth

In the frame of the River Dialogue project, the citizens' jury was held, for the inhabitants of Norrköping Municipality in the Motala Ströms basin, on the title "How can we manage existing competing interests and, at the same time, preserve or improve water quality?", organised by Linköping University Research Team in February, 2004.

The preparation for the Swedish citizens' jury started in September 2003. As the jury was going to discuss problems concerning the Motala Ströms basin, the jury members were selected from the nearby Norrköping Municipality, which has 10000 inhabitants. A conference centre 20 km outside Norrköping was chosen to hold the jury since the location would make it easier for the jurors to focus on the jury and for organisers to reach the witnesses. The charge for the citizens' jury was: "How can we manage existing competing interests and at the same time preserve or improve water quality". The intention of the Citizens' Jury was to give input to policy makers and to get a normative discussion on the priorities that should be given in policies on water quality.

### Selection of the jurors

In order to fulfil the criteria of involving persons between the ages of 18-75 and representing an equal amount of men and women, the selection of 1500 addresses was acquired from the Statistical Institute of Sema. The invitation letters with brief information details of what is required from jurors and a description of the River Dialogue project were requested to be returned with specifications regarding their age, gender, highest education level and profession. All 47 answers were received six weeks after sending out invitations, the response rate accordingly 3,3%. These respondents were phoned

and asked about their motivation, awareness about the time investment, and if they were or had been involved in the city council or water management.

Selection of 12 respondents was representative of Norrköping community in the educational, ethnic as well as sex base. Selected jurors and four reserves were invited to the pre-meeting. Due to different circumstances all four reserves were accepted on the Jury.

## Choosing the witnesses

The research team selected witnesses/experts for the jury from a wide range of interest groups such as agriculture, fisheries, nature conservation, provincial government, environmental department at the municipality of Norrköping and the industry in Norrköping municipality. Expertise and good communication skills were the criteria for choosing witnesses.

As for the choice of the witnesses, later the evaluation of the jury by the jurors showed that more detailed information (1) on the sources of nutrients, (2) judicial framework of water management, and (3) issues of sufficient water supply would have required additional coverage by witnesses.

All potential witnesses were positive to participate in the Jury.

Three weeks before the Citizens' Jury a **pre-meeting** was organized in order to prepare the Jurors for the process and each other. Also, the Jury contract that includes the organisers' and the jury's obligations in the Citizen's jury was signed by the jury members. In addition, the content of the charge and the agenda of the jury were accepted.

As one of the aims of a citizen jury is to increase awareness about the problem under consideration, not only among the citizens who participate in the Jury, but also among society as a whole, local as well as regional media was turned to in order to ensure wider publicity of the problem as well as to the Jury itself.

## Jury process

The Citizens' Jury took place on February 7th-8th, 2004. There was welcoming session from the research team. Thereafter, a pre-questionnaire was filled out by Jury members.

Five witnesses were called to the Saturday sessions and four witnesses to the Sunday session. Each witness was given 20 minutes presentation time to describe their viewpoint and after that the Jurors were given the possibility to ask a few immediate questions. The Jurors were then divided into two groups that had 20 minutes for discussion and to come up with further questions to the witness. Each group had a reporter that presented the questions at the interrogation session, which was about 40 minutes. The reasons for dividing the group into smaller units and for constantly changing the reporter were to stimulate less articulate members in the group to come up with questions and also to present them.

The chairman of the farmers' association carried the idea of *'since human needs the food*

*farmers produce they are themselves an environmental threat*' throughout his presentation. Persons from the sport angling club, Paper mill, union of water users, Environmental and Health Officer presented Norrköping municipality's view on the tools to improve water quality. A researcher presented the models for enhancing the dialogue between users, politicians and experts. Representatives of the nature conservationists talked about the largest non-governmental organisation in Sweden and its activities.

After these sessions the jurors had 20 minutes alone for personal evaluation of what issues they thought were of interest and ought to be included in the recommendations. After that, in groups, the first draft of the recommendations was drawn up and after that the recruiter formulated the preliminary conclusions from the discussion in the beginning of the week so the jury could read and make comments before the deliberation day on Saturday the week after.

## The Jury's recommendation

Jury recommendations were written on the following weekend after the Jury. By using a power point programme the preliminary recommendations could be seen and commented on by everybody. The recommendations were discussed, one by one, until a consensus was reached. The jury members were more or less in agreement about the priorities and if some had a slightly different view, they mostly agreed with the group. Thereafter, recommendations were presented to the provincial governor and the democracy officer from Norrköping Municipality. The recommendations are brought forward to the biologists working with the new water directive authority and discussed at a meeting in Kalmar in April 2004 in the regional government meeting.

## Evaluating the jury

The group process within the Jury was observed as well as the process of decision-making within the group. As can be observed in all groups, certain aspects could be distinguished among the jurors. The **group process** was observed when the Jury acted as a whole, and also in sessions in which the jurors split up in smaller subgroups. The behaviour of the jurors, as well as the expression of viewpoints and opinions by the jurors, was observed. When the Jury acted as a whole about half of the Jurors were more active in the discussions but everybody did talk to some extent. In the sub-groups (six persons) everyone spoke relatively more. During the two days, the project leaders noticed that some of the people, that were more dominant in the beginning of the citizens' Jury, became less dominant while others became more talkative. The project team observed that the opinion of the more dominant jurors at the Citizen jury were also more dominating in the writing of the recommendations. But two people who had had a low profile at the jury stage spoke more during the writing of the recommendations.

## Jurors-witness interactions

The jurors were asked to fill out a questionnaire for each witness. It appeared that the jurors were very satisfied with the witness presentations and that it had been very helpful. Nine of the jurors said they definitely had a better view on the discussed subject now than before.

Some witnesses gave their opinion about the way the citizens performed their task. The witnesses who had their presentations in the beginning of the citizens' Jury said they had expected harder questions from the jurors. During the days the questions became a bit more critical and to-the-point.

In the end of the Citizens' Jury, the jurors received a form to evaluate the entire Citizens' Jury. The Jurors were generally very satisfied with the Citizens' Jury, judging the Jury with grade marks ranging from 8 to 10 in the spectrum where 10 is the highest grade.

The moderator with (independent form organisers) long experience of leadership and group processes led the Jury process including the discussions of the jurors. All jurors indicated that they were very pleased or pleased with the way the moderator directed the Jury process.

The overall satisfaction of all jurors was very high. All twelve jurors said that the Citizens' Jury had met their expectations and that they would participate in a Citizens' Jury again. Most of the jurors (seven) thought that the whole process in general was neutral; one juror each thought it was very biased or biased and three thought the process was not biased at all.

### Satisfaction of jurors about the Citizens Jury

	Less Positive		Very Positive	
Grade	7	8	9	10
Amount of jurors	2	5	2	3

The Citizen's Jury brought new insights about the municipality's activities on water quality enhancement, lack of information about background of water quality on local, regional, national and EU level, overall vitality of the water problem.

Citizens suggested that there should be longer time for the discussions; inform the Jury ahead of what exactly is going to be discussed giving more time to get acquainted with the issue. All members of the Jury said that the witnesses increased the knowledge concerning water quality and that the witness influenced their opinion in the advice giving to the policy makers. Jury members indicated some knowledge gain and pressure from their co-jury members. More than half of the group felt that one or more jury-members have had more influence on the advice to the policy-makers.



## **Citizens' Jury in Estonia: Water transport on the Emajõgi River in the Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve**

Margit Säre

This report gives an overview of the Citizens' Jury, which was held for the inhabitants of Puhja and Rannu rural municipalities (Estonia) on title "Water transport on the Emajõgi River in the Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve?", organized by Peipsi Center for Transboundary Cooperation in November, 2003.

The preparation of the Citizens' Jury started already four months before the Jury. In the organizing process, several meetings and discussions were held with local politicians, environmental specialists and NGOs in Tartu County, in Rannu and Puhja municipalities but also with business sectors such as Tartu river port.

These meeting helped to find the best way for jurors selection, to define the charge of the jury, to find witnesses and also to secure the follow-up process.

The regional and central government officials welcomed the Citizens' Jury method with great enthusiasm and were very much interested in the results.

### **Finding jurors and the charge**

The selection of jurors was based on the random selection. There were some difficulties in receiving a register on population: local municipalities are not allowed to give out election rolls or other kind of registers of the population as these contain personal data; the post offices refused to give out their registers with the same explanation. In addition there is also not an available telephone directory for only those municipalities. As Puhja and Rannu municipalities print monthly local newspapers, (1000 and 1500 copies respectively), which are distributed to every post-box in the territory of the municipality, the mayors advised us to use this tool for distributing invitations.

Consequently, in the beginning of October, 800 letters were distributed with local newspapers. The letter contained: a) a description of the Citizens' Jury and an invitation to participate in the Citizens' Jury; b) a questionnaire on environmental issues in the Emajõgi region and an empty reply-paid envelope for responses.

All together 49 answers were received, thus the rate of willingness to participate was 6,1%. The wish to participate might not be too high because of the fact that the tradition of public participation in Estonia is very new and people might feel estranged when receiving an invitation to the Citizens' Jury, as they do not know what it is all about.

Out of the 49 respondent, 15 people were selected, paying attention that we would receive an equal number of men and women, including people with university, gymnasium and primary education, from different professions (teacher, tractor-driver, pensioner, museum-worker, unemployed, NGO person etc.), and also from different age groups.

With selected 15 jury members the telephone interview was made, to receive more information about their educational-professional background and motivation to participate.

The selection of the assignment, or the task what the jury gets, was based on the results of the focus groups, held in the vicinity of the Emajõgi River in summer 2003. As the focus groups raised the issue of water transportation in the Emajõgi River many times and the conflict of interest between environmentalists and tourism and water transportation companies emerged, the proposal for the assignment of the Citizens' Jury was that topic.

The charge of the Jury was also discussed with local officials and environmental specialists in the region, and also with the jurors in the pre-jury meeting, and it was supported by most of the people.

## **Conducting the Citizens' Jury**

Before the Citizens' Jury, a pre-meeting was organized on 28th of October. The pre-meeting was aimed to introduce participants with each other and with the organizers, explain them in detail the jury process, their role and responsibilities.

The proposed charge, given to the jurors was "Water transport on the Emajõgi River in the Alam-Pedja ecological reserve" and it received positive feedback. Some advice was given regarding the choice of witnesses.

The Citizens Jury "Water transport on the Emajõgi River in the Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve: what would be the compromise between the interests of environmentalists, entrepreneurs and local inhabitants?" took place in Tartu, Emajõe House, on November 14-15.

The members of the jury comprised 14 people: 8 women and 6 men. A professional moderator facilitated the event. During the two days five witnesses presented their view on the Emajõgi River water transportation issues: the Tartu Navigational Marking department of the Estonian Maritime Administration; the Waterways Development Foundation, also representing the Port of Tartu; from a nature conservation society "Kotkas" and the keeper of the Alam-Pedja Nature Reserve; Lake Võrtsjärv Foundation

and from an engineering bureau. Each presentation was followed by discussion and time for questions.

Having listened to the presentations, jurors were split into four groups, where they worked out their proposals and recommendations regarding the development of water transport on the Emajõgi River. The groups were given two issues to be answered.

- 1) Firstly, the groups were asked to give a wider answer to the question whether they were for or against water transport on the Emajõgi River.
- 2) The second task was to work out proposals, setting preconditions for the development of water transport.

The presentations of the four work groups showed that the local inhabitants are in favor of developing water transport on the Emajõgi River. Subsequently, the proposals and recommendations given by local people, in the development of water transport, were explained in a detailed manner. The permeating idea of all groups – in the development of shipping traffic it is extremely important to take into consideration the natural environment and the interests of local people.

## **Evaluation of the Jury**

At the end of the event, all the witnesses and the members of the Citizens' Jury could have their say. Several presenters mentioned that this was the first experience for them to listen to opinions of local people in the issues of water transport and they were surprised that people were so cognizant of the topic.

The members of the Citizens' Jury said they were very pleased to receive an invitation to such an event and that they had an opportunity to express their opinion. For quite a few of the people, this was the first time to participate in an official seminar. The witnesses were praised and the fact that the day provided a lot of new knowledge was commended. The citizens were of the opinion that the environment and the issue regarding water are of extreme relevance for them.

Several participants (incl. the witnesses) stressed that the important asset of the event was that the Peipsi CTC assembled the specialists of different fields in one room. This way, they could mutually develop and exchange their thoughts in peace and the grateful audience provided new angles to the discussion, thanks to the asked questions, acting as an active discussion generator. Everybody felt included, as every person could have his or her say. The general atmosphere was very warm and positive, with a real spirit of cooperation being predominant – this was underlined by a number of participants in their final statement.

People were also asked to fill in the feedback questionnaires where they were asked about their opinions on the general organization of the Jury, the level of presentations, the need for a Citizens' Jury and its results. According to the replies all members agreed that citizens' jury met their expectations. The majority of respondents agreed that the citizens' panel raised their awareness on water related and water transportation topics.

In conclusion, it could be said that the way people reached the recommendations has to be considered at least of similar importance as the recommendations themselves. The



feeling that someone is so much interested in the opinions of citizens' came as a surprise to a number of participants – it also evidences the fact that the ideas and methods of public participation are not yet wide-spread in Estonia.

The Citizens' Jury proved very well that people, when thinking together in a pleasant constructive atmosphere, prevent conflicts and, by way of compromises, reach solutions. And these people do not all have to be experts.

## Outcome of the Jury

The summary of the Citizens' Jury report was sent to the jurors and the witnesses at the end of December, in order to obtain their assessment. After the feedback circle and the approval of proposals, the report was sent to relevant ministries, environmental authorities, rural municipality governments, NGO-s and the enterprises dealing with the development of the Emajõgi River.

Following the Citizens' Jury, intense communication continued both with the jurors as well as the witnesses. On their own initiative, the citizens' organized a Christmas party roundtable, inviting the jurors and the organizers.

The Citizens' Jury, as a totally new work format, deserved quite a lot of interest in the Estonian media before and after the event.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that the organization of the Citizens' Jury regarding the Emajõgi River went well. However, it is undoubtedly a relatively expensive and time-consuming activity and therefore, it is sensible to only use this system in the case of major problems.







## Citizen involvement in exploring the future of Lake IJsselmeer

Dave Huitema, Marleen van de Kerkhof, Rienk Terweij, Maria van Tilburg, Femke Winsemius

In this part the details on the Citizens' Jury held in Markermeer, IJsselmeer will be discussed in more detail. The intention of the Citizens' Juries was set as to give input to policy makers and to get a normative discussion on the priorities to be given in policies on water quality, such as the Water Framework Directive.

The assumption for short travel distances, and thus lower time-investment for the jurors would increase the response of the potential participants for the jury is the main reason to focus on a city close to IJsselmeer, Markermeer. Markermeer's polluted silt and relatively low nature values are striking problems to find out the local people's opinion about them.

The research team selected the charge of the Jury "What should be the points of attention concerning the policy carried out by the government with regard to the quality of water in the Markermeer".

The process of finding Jurors began as a selection of 2000 addresses in Markermeer received a letter, a reply-card and a flyer. In six weeks, after sending out the invitations, 56 reactions were gathered, that made up the response rate 3.05%. Phone conversations with respondents clarified their motivation to participate and led to the selection of the most suitable candidates. Among the former another selection was held in order that the jurors reflect the population of Lelystad (50% men and 50% women). Fourteen jury members, who promised to be present on the pre-meetings and on the Jury days, signed contracts.

Witnesses were selected among the professionals working in the field of the charge; also the ability to depict their point of view in an understandable manner. IJsselmeer being the area important for recreational and agricultural, fishing, shipping sector and as a source of spare drinking water and natural area, the witnesses were meant to represent these fields of life. Initially, the focus of the research team was to get

local and regional media attention. A story was published in local as well as regional newspapers, whereas the radio programme was produced successfully, too.

### **Pre-Jury meetings**

In order to prepare the Jurors for the Jury process, two pre-meetings were organised a few weeks before the actual Jury. Pre-meetings were to stimulate group cohesion and to improve the Juror's skills to question the witnesses and to jointly make decisions. The introduction of the Jurors, project team, the charge of the Jury, as well as the agenda of the Jury days, were introduced. The following brainstorming aimed at getting an insight to the issues that Jurors associate with water quality, and also to identify their information needs. The second pre-meeting consisted of the role play where the Jurors could practice their questioning skills and the information market where the Juror's could satisfy their interest or lack of knowledge in particular fields with the help of water administration, EU water Framework Directive, water economy specialists.

The charge and the agenda of the Jury meeting were accepted. The charge was accepted without any hesitation as one of the project team members paid a visit to every Juror to find out the mental associations that words "water quality" provoked in their minds by creating a cognitive map. By comparing the maps, sometimes representing a very broad definition of water quality, sometimes a narrower one, a common picture of the water quality was created for the project team.

### **Jury process**

For the Juror's, the two-day Citizens' Jury began with a warming-up exercise within the framework of decision-making. Eleven witnesses from different instances were asked to give a presentation during the Citizen's Jury. Each witness gave a fifteen minutes presentation on his or her point of view. After hearing two or three witnesses the jurors were given time to think up questions and thereafter an interrogation session followed. Two policy makers expounded their view from the viewpoint of Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality and the Dutch water Authority on the development of Markermeer. The fishing industry's and water purification company's representatives were the next witnesses to present their view on the issue. The next day recreation and nature conservation persons were present to share their points of view. Thereafter, the programme was followed by an excursion to the sewage purification installation. The Agricultural and Horticultural Organisation as well as the Bird Protection Organisation presented their view on the topic. After these sessions, the jurors formulated some preliminary conclusions about the subjects that they had heard during the day.

The recommendations on the hearings stemmed out of the shared conclusions. The advantage of this is that the recommendations will be clearly founded on facts. The deliberation day was structured into two parts: one about making factual observations and conclusions translating these into problems; the second about prioritising issues and thinking up recommendations to solve them. For both parts we devised a set of questions that were ordered in such a sequence that we would logically get to recommendations in

the end. These questions were answered by mainly brainstorming together but mostly pre-answered in smaller groups of 3-4 jurors. Everybody shared the reached conclusions – this is probably because there was sufficient time to discuss the findings of the smaller groups in the entire Jury afterwards.

## Evaluation of the Jury

As for the evaluation of the Jury, the group dynamics were observed. The occurrence of the groupthink and biased discussion results were dangers that the organisers were afraid would happen. To promote strong critical reviews as well as to give less articulate jurors a chance to express their viewpoints, the groups were regularly split up into subgroups. Group processes were characterised by jurors' behaviour as well as their manners while expressing their viewpoints. In general, silent and more dominant people characterised the group. Dominant refers to the speakers that speak a lot, take relatively more time, and direct themselves more to certain group members.

From the **Jurors' evaluation of witnesses**, it turned out that Jury members esteemed witnesses that: "are to-the-point", "give clear and accurate answers, have a clear presentation" and "use non-woolly language". The jurors were asked to give the witnesses grade marks from 1 to 10. Whereas most of the witnesses got an average grade between 6 and 7,5; the clear speaking and persuasive fisherman received a mark 8.2.

Witnesses were satisfied with the discussion after their talk. They also noted that the use of the stop signs by the jurors was a way of enhancing the jurors' self esteem and created the feeling that they were the leaders of the procedure.

As for the **decision-making in the Jury**, the opinions of dominant persons, who spoke a lot, were prevailing also in the writing of the recommendations. When jurors did not agree, they tried to convince the others. If that did not lead to accordance the subject was voted upon. The witnesses indicated their satisfaction about the information supply on the subject of their presentation and the procedure during the Jury. Most witnesses were also satisfied about the atmosphere and indicated their willingness to participate again.

In the Dutch case, the jury had followed a list of about ten questions prepared by the organising team. The structure in these questions was to first answer empirical questions so that the recommendations would have a solid factual basis. The normative questions were answered after that. The Dutch jurors felt the first bit somewhat boring.



## A comparative analysis of the three Citizens' Juries under River Dialogue

Dave Huitema

The second method used in the River Dialogue project is the Citizens' Jury. In this paper, we briefly delve into the concept of deliberative democracy, which is often used as a background for discussions on Citizens' juries, and explain the Citizens' Jury as a method. We will also report on the implementation of these methods in the three EU-countries where River Dialogue was implemented: Sweden, the Netherlands and Estonia.

### Effectiveness of the juries

Three advantages of deliberative democratic ways of decision-making are expected to be inclusivity, deliberation and citizenship. These rather non-concrete goals can be operationalised using a list developed by Rowe and Frewer (2000). According to them, participatory methods need to be judged by looking at their attainment of the following criteria:

1. **Representativeness:**  
are the participants representative for the wider community from which they are selected?
2. **Independence:**  
are the participants 'being participated'  
or are they fully in control?
3. **Timely involvement:**  
is the participation not too late  
(e.g. after decisions have been taken)?
4. **Impact on policy:**  
is participation meaningful in the sense that

it has an effect on policy decisions?

5. **Transparency:**  
is the process understandable for the public and can they observe it?
6. **Resource access:**  
do the participants have sufficient access to information or other resources they need (e.g. time) for their decisions?
7. **Clarity:**  
are the materials presented understandable, is the nature and scope of the exercise clear beforehand?
8. **Structure:**  
is the process well organized,  
is there an effective structure in reaching decisions?

According to Rowe and Frewer (ibid.), Citizens' Juries are potentially weak in two of these areas. The first is representativeness because there are doubts that a small group of jurors can be representative for the wider population. The second is in the realm of transparency and structure; some fear that jurors are subject to group pressure and may therefore tend towards an unreal consensus.

In the rest of the section, we will use these criteria for assessing Citizens' Juries as a method for introducing deliberative democracy in water management. Because the Citizens' Juries are not only of use for the public, but hopefully also for water managers, we are adding a ninth criterion, which is that of cost-effectiveness of the method. We will base our analysis on three reports about Citizens' Juries that were written under River Dialogue (Gooch and Linderoth, 2004; Säre and Unt, 2003; Huitema et al, 2004). We also use the outcomes of a questionnaire amongst the organizers of these three Juries.

### **Criterion 1: representativeness**

Although proponents of Citizens' Juries make a great deal of the representativeness of juries for the wider public, this goal is problematic to reach in practice. Difficulties are associated to: finding the population for which the jurors need to be representative, setting the characteristics for which they need to be representative, and then composing a jury that is in fact representative. The troubling issue here is that one would expect a deliberative democrat to care little about the characteristics of people (be they racial, nationality, gender, age, etc.) because of the belief in the transformative power of the jury, meaning that *'where one stands does NOT depend on where one sits'*. The founder of the Citizens' Jury, however, stressed on many occasions that a representative sample of the population should be taken. In the case of the juries discussed here, the organizers decided only to look at age, gender and education level. In addition, elected politicians, people with a career in water management, and the people that had a strong agenda for influencing the juries in a certain direction (assessed on the basis of telephone conversations) were excluded.

Country	Number of invitations sent out	Number of positive replies in time (%)	Reported overrepresentation of
Sweden	1,500 (mail)	44 (3.3 %)	Low education level 40+
Estonia	800 (newspaper insert)	49 (6.1 %)	Men 30+
Netherlands	2,000 (mail)	61 (3.05 %)	Men 30+ Highly educated

From the tables, one can read that a rather small percentage of those people that received an invitation wanted to participate in the jury. Amongst the candidates for the jury, young people were consistently underrepresented (if one compares the respondents to the general population), with in the Netherlands no interest at all from people below 30. All three juries were selected to be representative of the general population in terms of the three characteristics mentioned. A more fundamental issue may be related to non-response. There was explicit analysis of this, but the organizers indicated in the questionnaire that the socially active part of the population was over-represented.

## Criterion 2: independence

Normally, juries have a commissioning body, an authority with a task in policy preparation that wants a certain issue addressed and asks the jury for advice. In the cases discussed here, the funding for the juries came from the European Union, but the subsidizer attached no substantive conditions to the subsidy that would steer the juries in a certain decision. Instead the charge was decided on based on consultations with the local water managers and a set of focus groups (8-10) to see which issues were prominent and up for policy decisions. In the Estonian case, the result was a focus on water transportation, in the Swedish and Dutch cases, a focus on water pollution. In the three cases discussed, the juries had the opportunity to alter the charge, but this opportunity was used in neither case. In the Dutch case, this led to an accusation from the farmer's organization that the organizers had tried to 'brainwash' the jurors. In line with the right to set the charge is the right to control which witnesses are heard by the jury. In all countries, the juries used this right by adding one or two witnesses to the witnesses proposed by the organizing teams.

### **Criterion 3: timely involvement**

In all cases, the Citizens' Juries can be used as an input to the plan forming under the Water Framework Directive. As the development of River Basin Management plans is to take place in three to four years time, the juries were rather early than late. The juries were in time from the perspective of those having the responsibility of implementing the Water Framework Directive as there is relatively little information about how to communicate on the river basin management plans yet. The Dutch organizers corroborated the importance of political salience as they answered that *'The timing was quite good because the discussion about the European Water Framework Directive, in which water quality is the main issue, revived in the Netherlands after an alarming report on the implementation of this Directive in the Netherlands.'*

### **Criterion 4: Impact on policy**

At the time of writing of this paper, the recommendations that came out of the juries were still to be responded to by the respective authorities. In that sense it is too early to tell whether the juries had much impact on government policy. The indications are however relatively good, with, in each case, the responsible authorities willing to receive the recommendations and give a formal response to the juries. The Estonian organizers inform us that their *'general impression is that the recommendations themselves did not have so strong impact to the public; but more impact had the whole jury process: Several witnesses mentioned that this was the first time for them to listen to the opinions of local people, regarding the issues of water transport, and that they were surprised to see the extent of people's awareness; for many jurors it was the first time when they participated in an official seminar, where their opinion was asked on certain issues.'* For the Netherlands, the added values of the jury were relatively limited given the plethora of participatory practices that are already instituted in that country. The policy makers therefore commented that they heard relatively little new comments from the jury.

### **Criterion 5: transparency**

Even though the three teams worked on the basis of one guidance document, their interpretations of transparency were similar only to a certain extent. In all three cases, the press was notified of the Citizens' Jury and invited to write about it. Also, the press was allowed to interview the jurors at appropriate times. The interest of the media was, in all three cases, rather limited and restricted to local radio, TV and newspapers. In all three cases, the 'deliberation day' was not open to the public, as that would be considered to be too disturbing.

### **Criterion 6: Resource access**

There appears to be a bit of a dilemma present in the organization of Citizens' Juries. What seems to have happened in all three countries is that the jurors enter the process with relatively little idea what the jury will be about. Hence, they have difficulty in assessing the appropriateness of the charge, witness selection, and are not very critical



in their questions to the first witnesses. As the jury progresses, their knowledge increases and if only by comparing statements of one witness to another, once can start raising more critical questions. In that sense, jurors in Sweden but also in the Netherlands wrote, on their evaluation sheets, that they could have used more time or should have taken more time to prepare. Obviously, this is a lofty goal, but the jury already is quite a demanding process for the jurors (time investment in the order of 5–10 days, depending on personal choices). A more extensive preparation would add to this amount of time and possibly lower the willingness to participate even further.

In neither of the countries was it very difficult to find witnesses for the jury, with the Dutch team going through more trouble as several potential witnesses refused for a range of reasons. The Dutch evaluation showed what aspects of the witness' presentations the jurors appreciated most. Jurors appreciated witnesses that: "are not too governmental"; "have specific knowledge about the Markermeer"; "are to-the-point"; "give clear and accurate answers"; "have a clear presentation"; "use non-woolly language"; "make clear connections"; "speak from the heart"; "are open and honest"; and "use no jargon" (see Huitema et al, 2004).

### **Criterion 7: clarity**

In terms of the jury process itself: the jury – as already stated – has a dynamic that can be described as continuously finding out better what one wants to know. In addition, the jury should be given a certain degree of leeway in setting its own agenda and making its own plan. This results in a slightly ambiguous situation at the start of the process that may not be completely clear for the jurors. As the Estonian team writes: *they 'believe that before the jury, the jurors were a bit confused what exactly is expected from them. This is also understandable as it was the first (known) citizen jury in Estonia. However, after explanations everybody seemed to have a clear understanding why they were invited, what is expected from them and what are the general mechanisms of the Jury'. All three organizing teams took care not to raise expectations about the bindingness of the jury recommendations (which is an important motivating factor for jurors) and neither of the juries seems to have had great difficulty with that proposition.*

### **Criterion 8: structure**

The guidance document that the three teams used in this contained a rather detailed outline to the citizens' juries that was communicated to the citizens involved from the beginning (amount of preparation meeting, dates, etc.). There also was a clear format for witness presentations and some more general guidance as to how to generate a productive group process within the jury. The jurors were prepared for the hearings in terms of content (i.e. information market) and in terms of process (training in asking questions). Especially the possibility of group pressure, jurors trying to influence other jurors for a certain cause were considered dangers that had to be encountered (Huitema, 2003). In order to prevent this, the juries worked with the help of a moderator, who was (semi-)independent of the project team (Sweden, Estonia), or part of the project team (Netherlands).



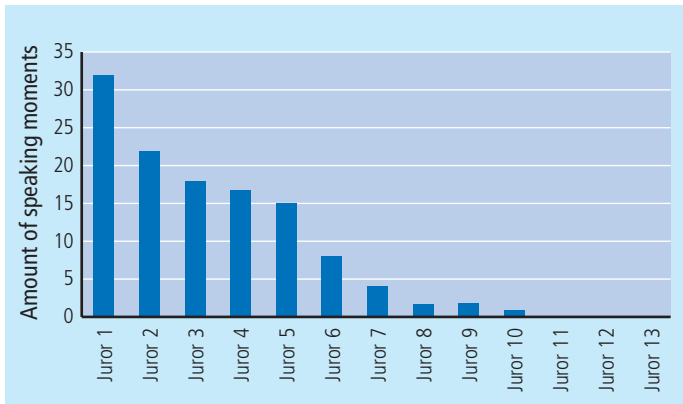


Figure. The amount of speaking moments per Juror in the Dutch Jury during the formulation of recommendations for the policy makers (plenary session)

The moderator had instructions to guard the group process in the sense that even more silent members of the jury should speak out and (if applicable) that questions raised would be answered, too. The figure above, based on measurements by the Dutch team—suggests that this is a real danger. One measure to try and prevent one or a limited number of jurors to dominate the process, the jury was split up in smaller groups during certain parts of the process (devising questions for witnesses, talking about conclusions). The idea behind this is that the more silent people feel more comfortable in a smaller group and speak out more. Measurements in the case of the Dutch jury (Huitema et al, 2004) suggest that this is correct, but that the effect is not remarkable.

The Dutch team reported that finding a structure for deliberation day was a bit of a challenge as the literature and the guidance within the project was not very explicit on how a jury reaches recommendations (other than that they can vote if there are differences of opinion – which does not sound very deliberative). In each case, the jurors were told that consensus on the recommendations was on the one hand not required, but that it would, on the other hand, strengthen the impact of the jury recommendations. The Estonian team made a direct link to the policy makers by inviting them to hear the conclusions of the jury orally. The Swedish and Dutch team both went for written recommendations. In the Swedish case, the organizing team, on the basis of group discussions, wrote these recommendations after the witness presentations. In the Dutch case, the jury had followed a list of about ten questions prepared by the organizing team. The structure in these questions was to first answer empirical questions so that the recommendations would have a solid factual basis. The normative questions were answered after that. The Dutch jurors felt the first bit somewhat boring.

## Citizens Jury – a good idea for water managers?

Each of the three organizing teams reported high satisfaction grades from the jurors and from the witnesses. Returning to our three basic criteria of inclusivity, deliberation and citizenship the organizers report positive experiences. In each of the three juries there were ordinary members of the public present that normally do not get involved in policy making. They showed a surprisingly large capability to master relatively complex issues and a fresh perspective on the issues at hand. Although there correctly were group processes present in the three juries, the decision processes can certainly be seen as a good step towards deliberative democracy. Especially, the Dutch project team reports a desire amongst members of the jury to get involved in public life (waterboard council, etc.). One measure to strengthen the instrument could be legal obligations to participate in a jury (should they be held more frequently) so that not only citizens participate that are already socially active.

The response of the authorities involved was rather positive, although there seem to have been hesitations initially in the Netherlands, where the ‘participation density’ is already quite high. The last question we asked the organizing teams was whether they considered the citizens’ juries a cost-effective method of involving the public. The Estonian team replied that *‘There are different public participation methods, which should be used in different occasions. Citizen’s Jury is not a cheap method. It should be used to solve big and complicated problems, where there are several interest groups involved. It takes minimum 3-4 months to prepare for the jury and requires day-by day commitment of minimum 3 people of the organizing team.’*

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## **River Dialogue Policy Recommendations: Focus Groups and Citizens' Juries – successful tools for enhancing public participation in water management decision-making?**

Kati Kangur

Focus groups and Citizens' Juries, as methods in the social sciences, are evolving rapidly and continuously expanding into new areas of use. Because of this the limits to the use of focus groups are not readily apparent. From the River Dialogue project's experiences, several suggestions and recommendations for deliberative democracy are advocated and practitioners can be drawn. Focus groups and Citizens' Juries are research tools but in a way also a study site for the participants.

By asking people from the spheres of life distant from water management, their mental constructs of not being able to influence such vital issues will be eliminated and the feeling of empowerment will be raised. With regards to how the focus groups contributed in involving the participants in water and water management, the difference between the groups that did not feel affected by water issues and the groups, which felt more affected, should be highlighted. The River Dialogue project experiences show that groups, which did not feel affected by water issues as well as being less knowledgeable about water, experienced that the focus group as well as the citizens' juries' sessions contributed, more or less, to increasing their awareness of water and water management, simply by discussing the topic. In contrast, the groups, which were more affected by water related issues and had a relatively good knowledge of the topic, viewed the focus groups more as a forum where they had the opportunity of discussing and voicing their opinions.

## **Focus groups' and citizens' juries' effectiveness as a participatory method**

The success of the focus groups and citizens' juries as methods for enhancing public participation is conditional. To begin with, groups in a society have different interests per se. The difference between the groups, which feel more directly affected by water-related issues, and the groups that do not feel particularly affected, needs to be taken into consideration. The effect of the focus groups and citizens' juries, in increasing public participation, depends largely on the motivation of the participants. Therefore, a onetime approach – taking part in focus group or citizens' jury discussion cannot fully change their attitude towards the issue at stake. Though the focus groups can alter participants' cognitive maps as they acknowledge the need for engaging citizens in the decision-making process. For groups that are interested in the discussion problem – the focus groups are a method of focussing their points of view in real suggestions for policy changes.

The tendency is that the groups having a natural interest in water issues thus tend to get more involved in water management. Furthermore, they are more inclined to make an effort and take part in the focus groups' type of activities.

The focus group and citizens' juries are definitely a good source of information on groups' opinion of the water management issues. At the same time, these are good practical exercises for the people whose participation in policy making is restricted to the boundaries of representative democracy. Focus groups and citizens' juries as methods for public participation enhancement can be especially emancipative for societies in transition from the command ruling to the democratic state of the art. Therefore, it can be highly recommended to use focus group method in post soviet societies.

## **Focus groups and citizens' juries as information channels**

These methods can be viewed as the awareness-building tools. Via sharing experiences and points of view the participants expand their understanding of an issue at stake. Awareness on the water management problems is the basis for recognising the need to act for improving the current situation. The fact that in the case study areas respective countries have significant water quantities, and a relatively good water quality, seemed to be one of the main reasons behind water issues being placed in the background, with other issues appearing to be of greater interest. The reasons behind it may lie also as, in post-transitional society, the materialistic values prevails the sense of sustainable management of natural resources, as Estonian focus groups revealed. In terms of increasing the awareness of water amongst the ordinary public, communicating more information about water related issues has to be highlighted as important.

The citizens' juries and focus groups are definitely good methods to be used for raising public awareness. Awareness of the problem and considering it relevant to your own activities enhances the willingness to work towards the goals.

In terms of this, the media's role can be seen as important. However, several participants meant that the information about water has to be made clearer and more educational as well less sensationalistic. In other words, more everyday aspects, with regards to water and water management, need to be communicated, in order to increase the awareness

amongst the public and, in turn, hopefully increase the interest in water. Media attention towards the Citizens' Jury, and focus groups, contribute to the broader understanding of the importance of public participation in the environmental decision-making. Also, it would address the public's attention to the problem that the focus groups or the Citizens' Juries are aiming to deliberate on. Media attention contributes to raising awareness on such kinds of work format as well as on the problem at stake.

### **Focus groups and citizens' juries for empowerment**

The tendency is that the groups that have a natural interest in water issues and thus tend to get more involved in water management. Furthermore, they are more inclined to make an effort and take part in the focus groups type of activities.

Yet, there did not seem to be any widespread expectation that they, through the focus groups, would be able to influence decision makers. Thus, it seems that focus groups can, in different respects, contribute in involving the public to a higher degree in water management; firstly, by increasing an awareness of water issues and secondly, as a forum where the participants feel that they can voice their opinions. Regarding the involvement of the groups, which already have a firm awareness and knowledge of water issues, i.e. the more affected groups, a problem seemed to be a lack of a more established dialogue between the involved parties, where the different parties are able to exchange view points and, thus, learn from each other. Although some of the groups perceived that they already had established channels with the involved authorities, these did not seem to be satisfactory and some of the groups expressed frustration with regards to feeling that their views were not taken into consideration sufficiently. For several groups, the focus groups seemed to be a way of acknowledging the problem of water management and at the same time to recognise possibilities to work in the field of water management.



## Recommendations for conducting Focus Groups

Kati Kangur

### Time investment and flexibility

Focus groups demand detailed planning from the beginning and a flexible time schedule during the process. River Dialogue focus groups showed that these are very time consuming activities. Careful planning and the recruitment process, as well as processing and interpreting gathered information, take time.

The focus groups recruitment phase, as well as the information gathering process itself, requires a great deal of flexibility in terms of approach. The research team has to be accommodating with the idea that focus groups demands great interest as well as time investment from the participants. Therefore, the clarification and good reasoning work raises the willingness to participate. It is not very sensible to conduct the focus groups during or around the holiday sessions. This is the time when the participants are hard to reach, as they are less willing to contribute to the activities from outside their inevitable agenda.

As for the focus groups themselves, not more time than 90 minutes should be reserved for the session. This is an optimal time as the intensive discussion exhausts the participants. This time allows all the participants to get the chance to say everything that they wanted to. A one and half hour period is a suitable time also for acquiring new information until the participants get overwhelmed.

### Creating the willingness to participate

The first contact and the explanation of the rationale of the focus groups plays a great role in feeling inclined to participate.

Especially due to the random sampling of the focus groups participants, the recruiting

work can be a very long-term process. The total selection of participants for the projects focus groups is usually too small to create statistically valid material, which removes the need for a random selection. Furthermore in the policy making process the focus groups can be created as deliberate groups, as the aim of these is to gather an opinion of the interest group. Therefore, it is useful to try to find the members of the focus groups from already existing networks. In that way, the leaders of the network or interest group can be used as the contact persons. **Using the existing groups** as a source for the focus groups' participants spares the organisers' valuable time and energy. The network members are definitely more responsive to the person that they already know when compared to the unknown researcher. Also, the existing networks can be useful in terms of organising the suitable room and time for the focus groups as they might have meetings themselves where the focus group could be one part. Focus group participants, with a homogeneous background, are more inclined to share their opinions with each other. Therefore, it is understandable that discussions in a pre-existing network are more lively and open. This also contributes to stimulate an informal atmosphere for discussion. Minimal steering by the moderator promotes the creation of an open atmosphere in the focus groups.

Though, using contact persons, mainly the leaders of the interest group to gather focus group participants, has its downside. One disadvantage is that the organisers might lose control over the recruiting process: who, how many and why they are invited together. The explanations given, why the particular invitees are crucial for the focus groups results, determine whether the invited person will show up and with what expectations he or she will participate. But as the River Dialogue focus groups' recruitment showed, first reactions are a substantial source of information on the general attitude towards the participatory democracy and interest in the problematic issue at stake.

A negative aspect of using the existing network is a danger that the information self-evident for the group members, but new for the research team will not be uttered or even touched upon during the focus group. Homogenous groups, consisting of participants with more or less shared views and interests with regards to water related issues, obviously contribute to the opinions being similar. Therefore the diversity of the information is also lower. Also, the learning effect in a pre-existing group discussion is minimal. Though, ideally, broadening participants' opinions on the topic at discussion should be one of the crucial aims of the focus groups. In addition a more heterogeneous group gives participants an experience to utter and defend one's opinion in a more diverse company. Nevertheless, it has to be borne in mind that mixed groups with regards to degrees of knowledge can lead to the more knowledgeable participants dominating the discussion.

Bearing these River Dialogue project experiences in mind, it can be recommended to have more diverse groups when it comes to giving participants an experience of deliberating on the different points of view and broadening ones views on the issue.

It is important that there are more people asked to take part in the focus group discussion than actually expected to show up. The safety margin has to be achieved in order to ensure the optimal number of participants, as some of the prospective participants will not eventually be able to participate for some reason.



Last but not least, ice-breaking questions, good explanation of what the focus group is about and stating the questions clearly contribute to the pleasant atmosphere of the focus groups.

### **Focus groups as a multidimensional source of information**

Focus groups are interesting and fruitful methods to work with, primarily as they allow researchers to interact with the subjects of our study and to provide us with an in-depth insight into their views on water management and environmental questions. Focus groups are suitable to use as an explorative method to get insights into an issue not covered before.

The results of the focus groups as well as the Citizens' juries do not reflect the population's point of view. To be exact, through both of the methods a selection of the population will be gathered. It must be borne in mind that the participants represent a fraction of the population that might be more interested in particular focus groups' topic and or are more reactive in their social life. The conclusions made from the focus groups' analysis cannot be considered as the ultimate truth that applies for all the community.

Transforming the spoken contents of a tape to written form will never be able to capture all of the subtle communication that goes on during a focus group. The first reactions when the participants were contacted to invite them to participate in the focus groups can bear very insightful information. Response can reflect the general attitude towards the issue as well as willingness to contribute to the discussions on a particular topic. Also the dissuasive reactions from the persons that end up not taking part in the focus groups carry a message with an attitude to the issue in concern or the participatory approach itself.

The group process, including the behaviour of the participants, the atmosphere of the group as well as the group interaction, is the basis where the opinions of the participants, and therefore also the whole outcome of the focus groups, will be formed. Therefore, an important source of information is the observation made during the focus groups. The body language and expressions reveal the participants' attitude towards the topic at stake and how they feel about talking on the subject. This information in addition to the transcription of the focus groups' discussions gives already a good overview of the participants' knowledge and attitudes on the issue.

The analyses of focus groups, held with relevant groups of the public as well as the consideration of the process aspects of the groups and the groups from the participants' point of view, illustrate a wide number of issues in terms of what the group participants perceived as important with regards to water and water management. It has to be borne in mind that the result of the focus groups cannot be a grounded theory. Through the focus groups certain descriptions and explanations can be correlated with the focus groups transcribed and coded data. To get good insights from the material – it is important to develop, transform, and retest and always question the conceptions of the gathered information. Thinking creatively with the material is important in order to be able to create truthful conceptual frameworks.



## Recommendations on using a Citizens' Jury

Kati Kangur

The Citizens' jury is definitely a more direct method for public participation in water management than the focus group is. In the case of focus groups, enhancing participants' willingness to participate in the water management decision-making is a high goal in itself. In a Citizens' Jury, the members of the jury are set forth with a situation where they have to come up with informed policy-decisions themselves.

In the River Dialogue project, the intention of the Citizens' Juries was set to give input to policy makers and to get a normative discussion on the priorities to be given in policies on water quality, such as the Water Framework Directive. Initiative for Citizens Juries can be seen as a useless attempt as many public issues are too complex for ordinary citizens to grasp. The River Dialogue project team shares the contention that the Citizens' Jury contributes to an essential part of democracy whereas people develop "informed preferences as opposed to unreflective prejudices". Diversely informed people are able to weigh the arguments and counter-arguments of a certain contention. Therefore, they are able to make a decision based on their rational thinking rather than on biased assumptions based on their subjective life-experience and knowledge base.

River Dialogue experiences show that participants have a surprisingly large capability to master relatively complex issues and a fresh perspective on the issues at hand. Although there correctly were group processes present in the three juries, the decision processes can certainly be seen as a good step towards deliberative democracy. The Citizens' Jury is a time-consuming and costly method for enhancing public participation. Therefore the cost-effectiveness of the method should be taken into consideration while planning the research.

## **Influence on policy-making: Plethora of participatory activities *versus* bureaucratic technical knowledge based decision-making**

Influence on the policy making largely depends on the capacity of the administrative power to apply the recommendations into the policies. Acknowledging the Citizens' Juries as a source of valid base information for the policies is crucial for taking actions according to the recommendations. In the countries where the civic movement and participatory approaches is not yet so well established more explanation needs to proceed the understanding of the purpose of using such methods and the use of these data. Conducting a Citizens' Jury will be more welcome in the countries where the participatory methods have not been introduced yet and the public has not had the chance to influence the policy decisions to a larger extent. Though, participatory methods of Citizens' Juries are most effective in the sense of empowerment of the jury members in the societies where the deliberative democracy is still to be introduced. Its deliberative effect on the participants is most evident among the participants that have never had a chance to voice their opinion in an official seminar on certain issues. Nevertheless, the application of the Citizen's Juries outcomes might meet reluctant responses of representative democracy in newly democratised societies as well as where the democracy and its mechanisms are well established.

The effect of the participatory methods is lower in the countries where there is an abundance of such kind of attempts. For example, the River Dialogue Netherlands research teams' experience showed that the added value of the jury was relatively limited given the plethora of participatory practices that are already instituted in that country. The policy makers therefore commented that they heard relatively few new comments from the jury.

Empirical data from the socio-economically diverse communities of River Dialogue case study areas' communities show that people are ready for and cognisant enough to discuss the complex issues of water management. This allows us to make an assumption that the method can be applied in following the Water Framework Directive in societies in the EU and behind its borders. Small groups of jurors cannot be representative for the wider population. Furthermore, the outcomes of the Citizens' Jury reflect only the informed citizens' decisions. Still, the Citizens' Jury offers a great experience to reach joint decisions.

### **Putting up the scene: selecting charge, witnesses and jurors**

The charge of the jury should be relevant for the members of the jury as well as for the receivers of the policy recommendations stemming out of the focus groups. On its basis, the problems that the Jury members hear witnesses and make a decision on should be an interesting problem that has already gathered some momentum in society. The topic should touch the jury members' everyday lives. A striking problem provokes the discussion and potential participants find it worthwhile to take part in the discussion of the topic. Alternatively, the charge can be decided based on the previous research. For example, in the River Dialogue project, the charge was decided based on the focus groups' results where the most intriguing topics were raised. Consultations with the

local water managers can also provide a good insight to the policy-makers priorities in the water management issues. These discussions show which issues were prominent and up for policy decisions. In that way, groundwork, for real implementation of the formed policy recommendations, will be based.

The selection of the witnesses should be objective and representative of all the factors of the issue. In order to avoid the subjectively biased choice of witnesses, negotiations with different authorities in the water management should take place. As the aim is to avoid “brainwashing” the jurors, the opinion of the jurors should be taken into account while selecting the witnesses. Finally, certain personal characteristics are required from the witnesses. A suitable witness presents his or her point clearly, performs openly and communicatively but at the same time sounds professional and believable.

Three important things need to be borne in mind when selecting the jurors: being a member of the population in the water basin area; motivation to participate; representative of the demographic cross-section of the population. A phone conversation with respondents clarifies their motivation to participate and leads to the selection of most suitable candidates. A threat exists that that the socially active part of the population will be over-represented.

The moderator, naturally separate from the research team, has to guard the group process in the sense that even more silent members of the jury should speak out and (if applicable) that questions raised would be answered, too.

## **Planning and Preparation**

The suitable time for conducting the Citizens’ Jury is when the issue at stake has gathered steam and political momentum. Using that time the Jury members would recognise the importance of the issue and could relate themselves to it already. In order to introduce a totally new topic for discussion, good explanation work as well as good attachment with the everyday problems raises interest among the people. Though also in the explanation work supplying biased information should be avoided. The persuasion will influence the constitution of the group of jury members.

A method to find out the jurors’ knowledge and views on the water issues is to conduct prior personal interviews with them. Clarifying the mental associations that words “water quality” provoked in their minds by creating a cognitive map is the groundwork for setting the charge of the Jury. By comparing the maps representing a very broad definition of water quality and sometimes a narrower one, a common picture of the water quality can be created for the project team. Pre-meetings held well in advance, before the Jury itself, will give more time to get acquainted with the issue and what is exactly is going to be discussed.

## **Pre-meetings**

To ensure intensive discussions and elaborative questioning of the focus groups, it is important that the participants are well informed about what to expect from the Citizens’ Jury and have a certain level of knowledge on the topic to be discussed during

the Citizens' Jury already beforehand. Relevant resources of information should be made available to the Jury members well in advance. A crucial part of preparing the Jurors for the Jury process is pre-meetings. At the pre-meetings held a few weeks before the actual Jury, the project team, the charge of the Jury, as well as the agenda of the Jury days, will be introduced. One of the components of the pre-meeting should be brainstorming to get an insight to the issues that Jurors associate with water quality, and also to identify their information needs. In this interactive process the witnesses and the charge will be decided upon. Pre-meetings will also stimulate group cohesion and improve the Juror's skills to question the witnesses and to jointly make decisions. An information market as a role-play, where the experts supply the future jurors with information, should be organised. This will serve participants' interest or lack of knowledge in particular fields. At the same time, this evens out the level of knowledge among the participants. An information market also helps the Jurors to practise their questioning skills with the help of water administration, EU water Framework Directive, water economy specialists.

### **Conducting the Citizens' Juries**

In terms of the jury process itself: the jury - as already stated - has a dynamic that can be described as continuously finding out better what one wants to know. In addition, the jury should be given a certain degree of leeway in setting its own agenda and making its own plan. This results in a slightly ambiguous situation at the start of the process that may not be completely clear for the jurors.

A major concern of the team organising the Citizens' Juries is to guarantee the equal footing of the participants in the Jury discussions. Decisions made in a group situation are probably to a large extent affected by the group dynamics. Peer pressure might lead to unilateral consensus. A measure to try and prevent one or a limited number of jurors to dominate the process is to split the Jury members up into smaller groups during certain parts of the process. This measure can be used while devising questions for witnesses or when talking about conclusions. This preventive method also gives participants a chance to elaborate on the gained information in a less hectic situation and come up with well-grounded reasoning for the policy suggestions. The advantages of doing so are a greater number of issues can be addressed as the jury works more efficiently and people feel more comfortable in small groups and shy people therefore start talking sooner. Though the disadvantages have to be borne in mind: small groups contain fewer people with different opinions and perspectives and therefore offer less opportunity to learn as well as various issues can not be meaningfully discussed by the group, as a whole, after they have been in a smaller group already.

Changing reporters of the focus groups stimulates less articulate members in the group to come up with questions and also to present them.

### **Coming up with the recommendations**

The power of the recommendations lies in the manner of formulation and presentation. Recommendations clearly founded on facts, not just vague ideas, are more persuasive. In order to facilitate the Jurors to reach the recommendations a set of questions were

posed to the Jurors. The questions are ordered in such a sequence that logically leads to recommendations in the end. These questions should be answered mainly brainstorming together but mostly pre-answered in smaller groups of 3-4 Jurors.

Sufficient time should be given, citizens suggested, in order to discuss the questions as well as to reach the policy-recommendations. Citizens' Juries carried out by the River Dialogue researchers showed that the opinion of the more dominant jurors at the Citizens' Jury were more dominant in the writing of the recommendations as well. In order to tackle this problem the moderators and changing the reporters is of help. One of the keys to creating openness in the discussion and giving the Jurors more power to decide upon the path of discussion is to provide them with the stop signs. Stop signs can be used whenever the Jurors have a question or need more detailed information from the witnesses. Possibility to stop the witnesses is ways of enhancing the Jurors' self esteem and creates the feeling that they were the leaders of the procedure.

### **From recommendations to policies**

The method to bring the Citizens' Jury recommendations to the policy makers depends largely on the political situation and administrative capacities of the policy makers. Therefore, it needs to be decided by the research team how to bring the jury outcome forth.

River Dialogue project experiences showed that effective method of bringing the jurors' decisions to the policy makers is to let them present their points of views directly to the invited policy makers. This allows the policy makers personal contact with the authors of the recommendations. Personal presentation is gives the policy suggestions definitely more weight when compared to the anonymous decisions on paper. Subsequently the results of the Citizens' Jury should be presented to policy makers also as a hard copy on a CD or paper format.

The jury process should be open to the extent where the deliberation is free from extra disturbance from additional people in the discussion room. Therefore the discussions should not be open to the public, as that would be considered too disturbing.



## Appendix: Descriptions of the case study areas

### Motala River, Sweden

The Motala River is one of Sweden's largest river basins (15.500 km<sup>2</sup>). The total drainage area of the Motala River is made up of 51% forest, 29% open land, and 20% water. Motala's tributaries such as Nässjöån and Svartån are affected by pollutant emissions from populated areas and industries.

In order to facilitate the analyses of environmental conditions, overburdening and other influences on the area, the Motala River has been divided into 12 different drainage areas. These include areas dominated by forests, other parts are intensively cultivated; few regions are composed to a great degree lakes and streams, including those having big salmon, trout stocks and rich bird life. In places, sewage treatment works, outlets from several industries appear. Numerous areas in the Motala basin are very popular for water recreation and outdoor life. During the summer, in the lake and river districts the number of inhabitants usually multiplies considerably and as a result sewage treatment works have increased.

### Emajõgi River, Estonia

The Emajõgi River is 101 kilometres long and it is considered the border between Central-Estonia and South-Estonia. The river is situated between Lake Võrtsjärv and Lake Peipsi. The Emajõgi River belongs within the Lake Peipsi drainage area.

10 rural municipalities and one city lie near the Emajõgi. Extensive untouched natural areas exist at the Alam-Pedja and Emajõe Suursoo nature reserves. The Alam-Pedja nature reserve aims at marshland species protection and is especially rich in rare bird species. The Emajõe Suursoo wetland is a habitat protection area.

With an average population of 1000-2500, the municipalities, and Tartu town (100,000 inhabitants), are the main water consumers and wastewater producers in the Emajõgi River district. Despite this, wastewater production in the district of Emajõgi has decreased by half during the period of 1991-99. Agricultural activity and its dispersed pollution occur in the section of the Emajõgi from Kärevere to Kavastu because the river's tributaries run across agricultural lands.

After several years of an unfavorable economic situation, Tartu County Government and Pskov City Administration have put a lot of effort into restarting the Tartu-Pskov boat link in May 2005. There are more speedboat, motorboat and canoe users on the river, which is proof of the rising popularity of the Emajõgi.



## IJsselmeer basin, The Netherlands

IJsselmeer's surface is approximately 1,840 square kilometres. The municipalities around the IJsselmeer have a total of 1.7 million inhabitants

There is a dam that splits the lake in two parts of around 1,100 and 700 square kilometres. Certain parts of the lake have been turned into land ('the polders'). Water that flows into the IJsselmeer stems from the Rhine, but some regional water systems (rain based) also discharge into the lake. The lake fulfils functions from the perspective of the various users. As the retention basin for high water levels in the IJssel (and Rhine) basin the IJsselmeer controls the floods; it is a reserve of fresh water as well as the receptor of pollution discharges. From the environmental point of view, the IJsselmeer is part of the Ecological Main Structure (Ecologische Hoofdstructuur) and large parts are protected by the European Union Habitat and Bird Directive. Recreation and tourism is well developed: IJsselmeer is used for sailing, wind-surfing, beaches, vacation resorts. 60% of all inland-water yields stems from the IJsselmeer. Certain parts of the coast are protected landscape, whereas various towns are on the world heritage list or are otherwise (nationally) protected.

Emajõgi River  
ESTONIA



IJsselmeer basin  
THE NETHERLANDS



Motala River  
SWEDEN



