



Webinar Thought Leadership
Wim Timmermans, Wageningen Environmental Research
'Rural urban linkages combining safety and quality of living in delta cities'
16 June 2017

Webinar report

On 16 June 2017 a second Delta Alliance Thought Leadership webinar session with the aim of further exploring 'Rural urban linkages combining safety and quality of living in delta cities', was organised by Delta Alliance, Wageningen Environmental Research (Alterra), and facilitated by the Water Channel. The use of the urban natural system as a major foundation for urban development was discussed. The webinar provided an illustration of the efforts in minimizing flood risks and improving green and urban quality through an in-depth analysis of two projects in Hatirjheel and Lentse Bocht in Dhaka and Nijmegen respectively.

Key issue

The urban natural system, when instituted as the basis for urban development, can bring concrete solutions to create a balance between urban and delta development.

Presentations

The webinar was led by Wim Timmermans of Wageningen Environment Research (Alterra) and moderated by Lenneke Knoop of Water Channel. Over fifteen participants joined the webinar session. The Delta Alliance webinar started with an introductory presentation from Wim Timmermans. He build on some previous webinars, where he stressed the need to learn from new practices of intensive and multi-functional land use systems such as in Dhaka and Nijmegen.

Nahyan Hossain of Wageningen University and Research / Bangladesh presented a project work conducted in Dhaka. To deal with flooding risks in the city of Dhaka green-blue infrastructures have been examined and used to develop an urban water system to prevent as much as possible urban flooding. The plan was developed in such a way that also traffic policy goals were integrated. The presentation further assessed the socio-political response to these projects (Hatirjheel). Nahyan described the development of a final master plan with multi-functioning and intensive land and water use system, combining urban and delta development and further reducing encroachment.

Maarten van Ginkel of Sustainable Planning Department, Nijmegen presented the Lentse Bocht project. He mentioned the integration of the 'room for river' project aiming to provide flood risk safety with urban planning aiming for spatial quality at the local level. The integrated plan provided space for nature and safety for residents close to the river. Better flood risk safety, urban and city development, nature and recreation have been integrated in the plan. Maarten emphasized intensive citizen and stakeholder participation and investments.

Discussion

Questions were raised for discussion during the webinar session.

Simon asked: 'Did upstream countries also implement 'room for river' projects?'. Maarten answered that there are interventions employed by upstream countries to implement 'room for river' projects but they are not much integrated for river safety like those implemented in the Netherlands.



Simon again raised the question: 'Who financed the Hatirjheel projects, Dhaka or the national government?.' Nahyan answered that the projects were financed by the national government. Lenneke Knoop (TheWaterChannel) further inquired of 'how buildings close to the river are able to cope with floods?'. Maarten answered that functions (such as park cars, storages) of these buildings which are less vulnerable to floods are established at the ground floor. Conversely, other functions like electrical connections are done at the first floors of these 'resilient buildings' to prevent damage during flood events. He further mentioned the use of flexible barriers to keep relations with the river at times of peak discharges.

Conclusions

Wim Timmermans concluded that challenges arise and solutions to them are connected when 'water meets the city'. The dilemma of creating a balance between delta management and delta city development demands an effective and efficient combination of urban development and water management programmes while integrating nature based systems to promote citizen and stakeholder participation. Thus, 'the city needs the river and the river needs the city'.