



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

Webinar report

On the 19 April 2017, a Delta Alliance Thought Leadership webinar session 'Rural urban linkages combining safety and quality of living in delta cities', was organised by the Delta Alliance, Wageningen Environmental Research (Alterra), facilitated by the Water Channel. Rural urban linkages in general were discussed, as well as their possible contribution to safety and living quality in delta cities in particular. The webinar recognised the concepts of 'delta development' and 'development for delta cities' and identified plausible ways to combine the two concepts.

Key issues

Despite those differences, the challenges of deltas can be traced back to different and sometimes competing interest between urbanisation, agriculture and ecosystem services. The challenge is to find a new balance between these interests. This is both a question of good governance (what institutional arrangements and (planning and governance) tools are effective to steer sustainable deltas) as well as good practices (what multifunctional solutions and practices are available).

Presentations

The Delta Alliance webinar was led by Wim Timmermans, of Wageningen Environmental Research (Alterra) and moderated by Abraham Abhishek of MetaMeta/the Water Channel. The session was joined by over twenty five participants from four continents.

First an introductory presentation was given by Wim Timmermans. He stated that a strong intensification of land use occurred in the Dutch delta from the 1950's till now. As a consequence new multiple land use functions developed with high investment rates and commercial interests. At the same time a higher demand for citizen participation emerges.

Verónica Zagare of TU Delft / and the Coordinator of the Delta Alliance Wing in Argentina presented as an example the current developments in the heterogeneous Parana Delta in Argentina. The delta is very dynamic due to a combination of rapid natural sedimentation processes, intensification of agriculture and especially cattle industries and ongoing urbanisation and harbour development. Veronica concluded that there is a necessity for long term coping measures planned with the involvement of the society in decision making processes.

Dirk Wasscher, Wageningen Environmental Research (Alterra), presented a broad analysis of resilient food metropolitan systems using the example of the Rhine delta region. In this vision the delta is not limited to the physical or geomorphological delta (river and sea system) but covers cities in the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. Dirk stressed the strengthening of regional metropolitan food systems. This combines both regional sustainability and diminishes dependency on global food systems.

Discussion

During the session questions came up for discussion.

MUJIB raised the question 'What has been your experience with replicability of good practices across Delta cities? We hear a lot about the ingenious work done by the Dutch in managing their Deltas. But it is very different - technologically, economically, culturally than Bangladesh for example. Are there examples where technology/management practices have been transferred effectively? Wim



Timmermans answered that in the upcoming second seminar a presentation is scheduled by some very interesting Bangladesh, Dhaka examples.

Lenneke (TheWaterChannel) asked: 'Wim was showing examples of new combinations of land use like the small beach in Rotterdam. Are there similar examples of new combinations due to this land use intensification?' Verónica mentioned some examples from the Parana Delta and Wim announced that some examples will be presented in the upcoming seminar. Eddy Moors (Wageningen Environmental Research (Alterra)) raised the question: 'Are we creating more vulnerable societies by the continuously increasing urbanisation? For example are these strongly urbanized areas not more prone to the effects of drought on a much larger scale than the outer ring in Dirk's presentation? Is this large scale taken into account in urban planning?' Wim answered that cities can be developed, reconstructed and build much better in balance with their natural system.

Conclusions

Wim Timmermans concluded that this concept of rural urban linkages includes scale and different time horizons for water safety, urban and food security planning . It is a learning from practice approach, which was supported when discussing the Argentinian case study. Such a learning from practice approach is highly necessary to enable balanced rural, urban and water safety development in urbanized deltas of the world, linked to the rural context in which it is set. In a next session more in depth analysis will be done for two case study areas, one in the Netherlands, one in Bangladesh.