Learning about systemic governance practices from nine case studies

We sought to answer four research questions

• How does history contribute to the current governance performance?
• What constitutes facilitation in the case study?
• What is the extent and nature of stakeholding in the situation?
• How is governance or performance organised and understood?

Research approach

• Our approach was systemic, using diagramming to draw out implicit understandings and subtle distinctions;
• Systems maps were devised for all nine cases;
• We sought to explore the extent to which the four research questions could be said to be operationalised in the case study situations.

Insights for Europe

Water governance in a climate change world requires spatially and temporally grounded systemic designs of effective but dynamic governance performances.

Key findings

1. Mention of conscious learning processes was missing from the case study practices; some formal evaluation processes may have produced learning.
2. With no conscious attention to learning processes, perspectives may differ widely in relation to the same experience.
3. There is little investment in relational aspects of facilitation which are often not valued.
4. In “adventurous performances” the distinctions between ‘researcher’, ‘stakeholder’, ‘expert’ and ‘practitioner’ and ‘theoretical’ or ‘applied knowledge’ are not so important. All can be seen as part of a ‘performance system’.