

4 How contextual factors influence the effectiveness of international projects

The case of Dutch-funded flood risk management projects in Romania

*Joanne Vinke-de Kruijf, Carmen Teodosiu,
Hans Bressers and Denie C.M. Augustijn*

4.1 Introduction

River floods are one of the most threatening natural risks and have many negative consequences for humans and human society (Samuels *et al.*, 2006). Also in Europe, floods have been increasing and are currently the most common natural disaster (EEA, 2008). International organizations expect that the frequency and intensity of floods will only grow further due to climate change and the increase of population and economic activities in flood-prone areas (WMO, 2009). Within this context, international efforts aiming at flood risk reduction are growing. An example of such effort is the Associated Programme on Flood Management that promotes the concept of Integrated Flood Management (based on the concept of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), see Chapter 2) and supports the implementation of actions that follow this principle (APFM, 2012). In a European context, best practices on flood management were recently translated into a framework directive for the assessment and management of floods (European Directive 2007/60/EC). While floods are common problems, floods have diverse causes and countries also have different capacities to deal with them (Van Alphen and Lodder, 2006). As Chapter 2 explains, universal remedies or blueprints for effective water management do not exist. This means that any international transfer of knowledge should be done with care and only after careful consideration of the context-specific conditions and circumstances in which knowledge was developed. While many scholars acknowledge the importance of context in water management, little is known about how contextual factors inhibit or promote knowledge transfer. This chapter aims to address this research gap by asking: how do contextual factors influence the effectiveness of water projects that involve international knowledge transfer?

In this chapter, knowledge transfer projects are defined as interactive processes in which actors of two or more different countries share and acquire

knowledge for the purpose of using it for case-specific objectives (Vinke-de Kruijf *et al.*, 2011). This definition emphasizes that an effective knowledge transfer includes the application of knowledge. In this sense, knowledge transfers are very similar to policy implementation processes. We therefore assume that the course and outcomes of knowledge transfer projects can be understood using the Contextual Interaction Theory (see Chapter 3). Empirically, this chapter builds upon the experiences of three projects that involved the transfer of knowledge about flood risk management from the Netherlands to Romania and were implemented with the financial support of the Dutch government. This implies that the projects under study are examples of transfers that are driven by the proactive attitude of a transferring country to export its knowledge (Stone, 1999). We therefore choose to assess the effectiveness of these projects from a Dutch policy perspective and define effectiveness as the extent to which a project contributes to the solving of flood-related problems in Romania and generates follow-up projects for the Dutch water sector (Vinke-de Kruijf *et al.*, 2012).

The structure of the chapter is as follows. First, we introduce our main theoretical concepts and case study methodology. We then introduce the projects (including the context) of the case studies. Subsequently, we describe the motivations, cognitions and resources in relation to these projects. Following this analysis of actor characteristics, we analyse and discuss the influence of contextual factors on the cases. The last section presents our conclusion about how contextual factors influence the effectiveness of international knowledge transfer projects.

4.2 Theoretical concepts and methodology

Contextual Interaction Theory as conceptual framework

As explained in the introduction, knowledge transfer projects are in this chapter conceptualized as policy implementation processes. Inspired by the Contextual Interaction Theory, we assert that such processes are shaped by the characteristics, i.e. the motivations, cognitions and resources, of the actors involved. Therefore, the following questions are central in our analysis:

- What are the substantive or procedural reasons (motivations) of actors for being involved and taking certain actions?
- What are the perceptions (cognitions) of actors about the relevance of the project, the urgency, nature and meaning of the problem at stake and potential solutions?
- What is the capacity of actors to act (financial resources, human resources and knowledge) and power to get things done (institutional resources)? (Bressers and Kuks, 2004; Owens, 2008; Vinke-de Kruijf, 2011b).

In an interactive process, actor characteristics are in dynamic interaction with each other and tend to change. These changes can form a basis to attain ultimate outcomes (problem-solving and follow-up projects in this case). According to Vinke-de Kruijf *et al.* (2012), the likelihood of realizing ultimate outcomes especially depends on the development of a joint motivating goal, the creation of a negotiated knowledge base (i.e. knowledge that is agreed upon and valid) and the mobilization of necessary resources (by pooling them if necessary). In addition, positive relational experiences increase mutual trust and therefore improve the chances on future cooperation, but are not analysed in this chapter.

While the course and outcomes of an actor-interaction process result from the dynamic interaction between actor characteristics, they are also embedded in wider, structural and project-specific contexts (see Chapter 3). Although we acknowledge that contextual factors only influence a knowledge transfer process insofar as they change the characteristics of the actors involved, we consider an analysis of contextual conditions, circumstances and differences to be beneficial, since such an analysis helps to understand why actors possess or develop certain characteristics. Literature shows, for example, that transfers tend to be easier between countries that are similar in terms of resources (Rose, 1993). A comparative analysis highlights that participatory approaches in water management are more effective in some countries than in others due to institutional factors (Mostert *et al.*, 2007). Another study shows that actors tend to implement proposed reforms that are socially acceptable or economically attractive while neglecting reforms that are incompatible (Sehring, 2009). These examples show that transfers are influenced by cultural, institutional and historical configurations (Rose, 1993). While research shows that context influences policy transfers, contextual factors do not necessarily determine the success of a transfer. Comparative research shows, among others, that the effectiveness of a transfer is not correlated with contextual similarity but rather depends on whether transfers are supported by actors who are 'pulling in', i.e. whether powerful actors are convinced that the transfer is useful and have a strong desire to change things (Kroesen *et al.*, 2007). This chapter discusses two ways in which contextual factors are likely to influence the effectiveness of a knowledge transfer process. First, actors of the transferring country have another contextual background and thus different characteristics than actors of the receiving country. Second, the interactive process and the knowledge being transferred need to be embedded in the wider and structural context of the receiving country.

Methodology

This chapter builds upon qualitative case study research as its research methodology. By doing so, we aimed to describe and to understand the

projects under study within their relevant contexts. This improved understanding is provided by analysing and comparing multiple projects that are embedded in a similar context (Yin, 2009). In this chapter, we compare three Romanian projects: the development of an Integrated Area Plan to create 'Room for the River' (case A); the implementation of a Flood Information and Warning System (case B); and the development of a Master Plan for Integrated Water Management (case C). All projects were implemented in collaboration between Dutch and Romanian actors in the period between 2008 and 2011 (see Figure 4.1 for the location of the case studies). In this period, the first author was based in Romania and collected data by means of direct observation, interviews and document analysis. She observed all major project activities (i.e. plenary meetings, workshops and field visits) and some of the project team meetings yet had no formal role in the design or implementation of the projects. To increase the reliability of her observations, she often cooperated with a Romanian co-observer and discussed the observations with project team members. She also regularly conducted informal interviews with project participants. After each project was completed, she conducted semi-structured interviews with the main project team members. The observational and interview data were complemented with written data that were retrieved, for example, from project reports, policy documents, websites and newspapers. For each

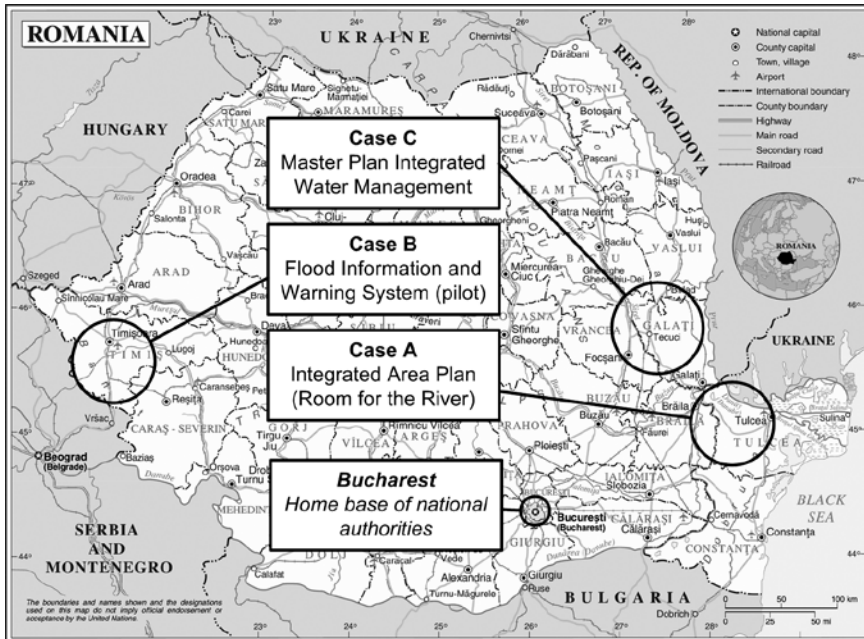


Figure 4.1 Map of Romania with the location of the three case studies (background map from United Nations, 2008).

project, a ‘thick’ description was prepared and published in the form of a case study report. These reports present detailed narratives of the project context, the interactive process and the characteristics of actors involved (Vinke-de Kruijf, 2011a, 2011b, 2012). The case studies were complemented with an analysis of Romania’s wider and structural context. For this, the first author analysed relevant documents (including literature, newspaper articles, legislation and policies), participated in meetings, interviewed policymakers and experts and distributed a survey among operational flood risk managers.

4.3 Dutch-funded flood risk management projects in Romania: context and case studies

Dutch-Romanian cooperation setting

The Netherlands has a long history in water management. Within this context, it has long been active in supporting the solving of water management problems around the world. In its National Water Plan of 2009–2015, the Dutch government mentions two major reasons for supporting water projects around the world. First, it supports contributions to solving water-related problems (especially mitigation of climate change and realization of the Millennium Development Goal on water and environment). Second, it aims to strengthen the international position of the Dutch water sector by supporting collaborative projects with potential spin-offs in the form of follow-up projects. These objectives are especially realized through the exchange of knowledge and experiences (Min. V&W, 2009). It is within this context that the presented cases received the financial support of the Dutch government. Cases A and B were financially supported by Partners for Water, a programme that aims to stimulate the implementation of innovative projects of the Dutch water sector abroad. Case C received financial support from a foundation that supports international projects of Dutch water boards.

The collaboration between the Netherlands and Romania on water and environment dates back to 1995 when the Environmental Ministries of both countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The number of Dutch-funded projects increased substantially after 1998 when both countries signed a bilateral agreement. This agreement formed the basis for the implementation of various Dutch-funded projects in Romania. Between 1995 and 2007, about 140 projects in the field of environment and water (costing over 20 million euros) were implemented with financial support from programmes like the Social Transformation Programme Matra and the Emerging Markets Cooperation Programme PSO/PSOM.

In 2007, Romania became a member state of the European Union (EU). At this time, the Netherlands began to phase out its bilateral assistance. Although the number of Dutch programmes that support projects in

Romania decreased, various funding agencies continue to provide financial support. Furthermore, bilateral contacts between both countries continue to exist. In 2009, the Dutch Union of water boards and the National Administration for Romanian Waters signed a Memorandum of Understanding (RNE and EVD, 2009). Through this collaboration, the Dutch water boards intend to exchange knowledge with Romanian water authorities (Unie van Waterschappen, 2005). In 2008, the Netherlands Water Partnership established a Romania platform that aims to strengthen the position of the Dutch water sector in this country. This platform was established since Romania is expected to become an attractive market: huge investments are needed to bring environmental infrastructure in line with EU standards but domestic capacity and expertise is limited (Van Peppen, 2008). In the past years, the platform organized a wide range of activities to promote Dutch-Romanian cooperation in the water management domain. The platform also initiated in collaboration with the Union of Water Boards a Dutch-Romanian panel with senior executives and civil servants in 2009. This panel meets regularly to discuss various water management challenges that relate to living in a delta area (e.g. flood risk management, water quality and international river basin management). Completed and potential collaborative projects in the flood risk management domain, such as the presented cases, are also discussed in this panel.

Case A: ‘Room for the River’ and people in the Cat’s Bend region

The objective of case A was to develop, in close cooperation with relevant stakeholders, an integrated plan that would contribute to flood risk reduction for the Cat’s Bend region. This region is located just upstream of the Danube Delta where two major rivers (the Prut and the Siret) join the Danube. The project was initiated in 2006 and implemented between September 2008 and December 2009. The project design was inspired by the Dutch ‘Room for the River’ concept, which involves the integration of safety with other functions (e.g. nature and socio-economic development) and a preference for measures that create more space for the river rather than traditional measures, such as the further heightening of dikes. The project was also based on a Romanian study on the reassessment of the Danube floodplains. For the Cats’ Bend region, this study recommended combining water storage with agriculture. The project involved a wide range of stakeholders including representatives of local and regional authorities, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and the private sector. This participatory process was supported by a team of two Dutch and four Romanian organizations. The team interviewed and invited stakeholders, prepared maps, visualized and conceptualized ideas, developed project materials, modelled the water system and calculated the impact of measures on the water level. The project resulted in three design concepts that could contribute to flood risk reduction along the Danube. The knowledge that was transferred and generated in the project

was not used in any follow-up actions. The formal commissioner of the project, the Ministry of Environment, did not pay attention to the project results. Local and regional stakeholders wanted to implement some of the outcomes but were lacking necessary resources. As the project did not contribute to problem-solving or follow-up projects, it has not been effective from the perspective of the Dutch financiers (Vinke-de Kruijf, 2011b).

Case B: implementation of FLIWAS in Banat region

Case B aimed to support Romanian water authorities through the pilot implementation of a Flood Information and Warning System (FLIWAS). FLIWAS is an internet-based application that helps to manage flood-related information before, during and after high water events. The application was recently developed in a European project and is currently being used by Dutch and German partners for the Rhine river basin. The pilot project in Romania was initiated in April 2009 and implemented between September 2009 and April 2010. The project was executed in cooperation between two Dutch consultants and four Romanian organizations. The pilot included the development of a Romanian FLIWAS environment (including the installation of an internet server and the training of potential users and administrators), the pilot implementation of FLIWAS at a regional water authority and various communication and dissemination activities. During the project, there were regular meetings with a wide range of actors and various work sessions at the regional water authority. Installing the FLIWAS on a national server constituted a major issue during the implementation process. Various experts had difficulties arriving at a mutual understanding. As a result, the server was installed much later than expected. To prevent further delay of the project, collected data were initially input on a Dutch server. The plan was to transfer these data to the Romanian server but it was unclear who was able and willing to do this transfer. In the end, data were never transferred and the regional authority did not begin using FLIWAS. The project therefore did not directly contribute to the reduction of flood risks. The project may still become effective as the Ministry of Environment was very interested in applying FLIWAS at a larger scale and also included the further development and implementation of a system like FLIWAS into a project proposal for the implementation of the European Strategy for the Danube river basin (Vinke-de Kruijf, 2011a).

Case C: integrated water management in the Tecucel river basin

The third case study concerns a project that was initiated by a Dutch regional water board following floods along the Tecucel River in 2007. The project aimed to develop an integrated framework (master plan) for the management of flood risks, drinking water and wastewater that would include several 'no-regret measures' (i.e. easily implemented measures that

improve the water system). The project was implemented in cooperation between six Dutch organizations (including a water board, water company, municipality, governmental agency and two private companies) and five Romanian organizations (including three municipalities, a local water company and a local person of a regional water authority). Dutch ideas on interactive planning, which meant to enhance collaboration between various actors, provided the inspiration for the project. The project included visits by the Dutch team to Romania and also a visit each by the Romanian team and a regional water company to the Netherlands. While analysing the problems, potential solutions and ongoing policy developments, the project team realized that regional authorities already drafted master plans, one for drinking water and wastewater, and one for flood risk management. This led the teams to the conclusion that another master plan would be redundant. The Dutch team therefore decided to focus on the formulation and further development of two no-regret measures (i.e. a separate system for sanitary sewage and storm water runoff for the City of Tecuci and a flood retention reservoir along the Tecucel River). As these measures did not have any regional or national priority, the teams were not able to mobilize the necessary support and funds to further develop these measures. However, the project did form a basis for a formal agreement, a Water Partnership, between the Dutch water board and water company and the Romanian regional water company, which acquired the local water company during the project course. This partnership will form the basis for further exchange of knowledge and experiences with drinking water and wastewater management for the next three years. The project itself was not effective: it did not contribute to problem solving; neither did it generate any follow-up projects that would benefit the Dutch water sector (Vinke-de Kruijf, 2012).

4.4 Case study results: characteristics of actors involved

Motivations and the development of a joint motivating goal

In all cases, most actors were motivated by the international dimension of the project; they simply enjoyed participating in an international project. The opportunity to transfer knowledge was another common source of motivation. Dutch experts are formally interested both in sharing and acquiring knowledge, that is, learning from the experiences of other countries (Min. V&W, 2009). However, the cases show that Dutch experts were especially interested in sharing their knowledge: they believed that their knowledge could contribute to the solving of water-related problems. For some actors, knowledge sharing was important not only from a personal but also from their organizational perspective. This especially applies to the water board and the water company that participated in case C. Together with other water boards and water companies, they committed themselves to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. Another

motivation for sharing knowledge was that it provided experts with the opportunity to further develop and test their existing knowledge. An expert in case A mentioned that international projects are very useful training for landscape architects as they have to apply their skills in an unknown setting. Experts in case B were eager to test whether the FLIWAS technology was applicable in another setting. For the private organizations involved, the increased chance of being involved in other international projects played an important role. Experts mentioned that their company participated in the project to strengthen their international network, position and portfolio.

A major motivation of the Romanian actors was to reduce water-related problems in the region under concern. Most of them highly valued Dutch knowledge and believed that the project could contribute to solving certain issues. They were therefore interested in acquiring Dutch knowledge concerning the application of a certain method, concept or technology or about potential solutions to concrete problems. They further expected that the international dimension of the project would help to raise national attention for local issues (local actors in case C) or would make them known as being forerunners (regional authority in case B). At the same time, actors in case A initially doubted whether their ideas would form the basis for the project outcomes and whether these outcomes would influence the decision-making process. Some of them were also sceptical about the role of Dutch experts and the added value of their expertise. When they witnessed that their ideas were taken into account, they also started to support the implementation of the project objectives. Like the regional and/or local actors in the other case studies, they eventually also saw the project as an opportunity to influence decision making. However, despite the objectives of all cases being (eventually) strongly supported by local and/or regional actors, they were often not implemented. One of the main issues was that the project goals were lacking support at the national level. Cases A and B were both initiated, and thus initially supported, by actors at the national level. In case A, this support diminished especially after the State Secretary was replaced. The Ministry of the Environment eventually ignored the results and the request of local authorities to support them with the implementation of results. In case B, the ministry stayed involved and was also motivated to include an application like FLIWAS in a new project proposal. Case C was designed in a bottom-up fashion where the ministry was asked to have a consultative role. Although local and regional actors were keen to involve the ministry, they were never able to raise sufficient support to further elaborate the project results.

In all cases, the motivations of some of the actors involved also changed during the course of the interactive process. Although Dutch experts in all cases remained committed to finalizing the project, several experts became less motivated to continue the collaboration. Experts of a Dutch governmental agency (involved in cases A and C) explained that their organization was formally committed to international water management

but that they discovered that the actual organizational support for such projects was limited. This lack of support is among the reasons why they became less motivated to continue working on such projects. The collaboration with Romanian partners was also often not as expected. In case A, several experts were disappointed about the expertise that was contributed by one of the Romanian partners and therefore reluctant to collaborate with them in future projects. In cases A and C, experts had doubts whether some of their Romanian partners were actually willing to make an effort to solve their water problems. This is why experts in case A left the initiative for follow-up with the Romanian actors.

Cognitions and the creation of ‘negotiated knowledge’

All cases were based on the recognition that the frequency and intensity of floods are increasing and that the reduction of flood risks and related issues forms a pressing issue. This cognition formed the main input for the project proposals that were prepared by Dutch experts following discussions with Romanian actors but this cognition often changed during the interactive process. In case A especially, the initial framing of the project by Dutch experts did not correspond with the actual problems in the area. Dutch experts expected that floods were a major problem in the region. However, when the project started, it soon appeared that Romanian partners and stakeholders did not share this cognition. In the opinion of the Romanians, the main problems in the area were of a different nature and included unequal access to resources, drought, declining biodiversity and a lack of public participation. Dutch experts therefore decided to broaden the project scope. The developed plans were still largely as initially expected by the Dutch experts involved. They created more ‘Room for the River’ and therefore contributed to flood risk reduction but also to regional economic development and a better micro-climate. In case B, floods were also perceived as being an important issue by the Romanian partners. In this case, some of the Dutch experts also discovered – although to a lesser extent – that the actual problems were different from expectations. A Dutch expert explained, for example, that he only realized during the project that FLIWAS could really reduce the vulnerability of the emergency management system that resulted from an overdependence on individuals and individual knowledge. Case C was also initiated in order to reduce flood risks but the scope of the project was broadened already from the beginning to also include problems in the water services sector. Only after the project started, the Dutch experts discovered that relevant actors did not know each other yet. In the opinion of Dutch experts, one of the main project results was therefore that the project created a connection between these actors.

All three cases concerned the transfer of ‘Dutch ideas’ to Romania. As these ideas had not been implemented in Romania before, both Dutch and Romanian actors were uncertain whether these ideas could be successfully

applied in the Romanian context. While case A was not very effective, most of the actors involved were very positive about the applicability of the concept and method used. Case B proved to Dutch experts that FLIWAS could be implemented in Romania. Romanian experts only partly shared this cognition. They doubted whether it could be implemented in other parts of Romania and – as they never began to use FLIWAS – also doubted its actual usability. The integrated and bottom-up approach in case C appeared to be rather ineffective. Dutch experts concluded that the integrated approach was of added value but it should be reconsidered and that a better balance was needed between bottom-up and top-down. However, several Romanian experts had doubts about whether such an approach could ever be effective in Romania.

Resources and the mobilization of necessary resources

In all cases, Dutch actors provided most of the financial resources for project implementation. The costs of the projects were partly covered by a Dutch funding agency (about 80 per cent in the cases A and B and about 50 per cent in case C) while the remaining costs were paid for by the Dutch organizations. Human resources were contributed both by the Dutch and Romanian organizations involved. In case A, Dutch organizations paid for the involvement of Romanian partners and covered other costs (such as meals and meeting locations). In cases B and C, Dutch experts collaborated more closely with Romanian authorities who could often arrange such resources for free. One of the critical issues in all cases was the financing of follow-up steps. All cases predominantly involved local and regional actors (e.g. representatives of governmental authorities, non-governmental organizations or other stakeholders). However, follow-up actions for the cases usually required considerable investments that were beyond the capacity of these actors. In cases A and C, actors from the area were motivated to continue with the project results but lacked the capacity to mobilize the resources for this. In case B, the ministry was more closely involved and was in the position to integrate a tool such as FLIWAS into a proposal for external funds.

Since all cases concerned the transfer of a ‘Dutch idea’ (e.g. ‘Room for the River’, ‘Sketch Match’, FLIWAS or integrated water management) from the Netherlands to Romania, Dutch actors were important sources of knowledge. Projects were usually driven by general knowledge and initiatives of the Dutch experts involved as Romanian actors lacked the expertise to apply these ideas. In this sense, the knowledge transfers took place in a typical development setting in which local knowledge meets general knowledge of external experts (Rist *et al.*, 2006). In all cases, a Dutch expert was responsible for the overall project management. In addition, Dutch experts often also made an analysis of which actors or stakeholders should be involved as Romanian actors were not familiar with the key concept,

method or technology being transferred. Especially in case B, Dutch experts could also contribute some context-specific knowledge as they had been involved in Dutch–Romanian projects before. Romanian actors were important sources of context-specific knowledge and often responsible for the organizational aspects, such as inviting stakeholders and arranging meeting locations. To manage the involvement of Romanian actors, each project had a Romanian project coordinator (and a Romanian project secretary in cases B and C). In case A, experts had a facilitative role and the results were mostly based on context-specific knowledge that was provided by stakeholders. Also in the other cases, there was attention to the inclusion of stakeholder knowledge but, in practice, professional experts provided the most knowledge.

Romanian experts were generally valued for their high level of technical knowledge but their knowledge contribution was on several occasions less than expected by Dutch experts. In case A, Dutch experts expected that the participating institute would really contribute to the project content (e.g. hydraulic modelling, processing of geographic information and preparing area maps). Only during the project did it appear that the institute could not provide such expertise. This was one of the reasons why the project outcomes were slightly different from expectations. It also caused some experts to have reservations about working with the same institute in any future project. Experts in case B had similar experiences. In this case, the installation of the server was expected to be rather straightforward. Only during the project did it appear that the appointed expert did not have specific experiences in this domain. In case C, one of the main misunderstandings between Dutch and Romanian experts was the need and availability of a master plan. Dutch experts only realized halfway through the project that a master plan was redundant as two regional master plans had just been approved. This shows that in all cases, Dutch experts attributed more knowledge to Romanian experts than they could contribute.

4.5 Analysis and discussion: on the role of contextual factors

The influence of differing wider contexts

The previous section shows that in all cases there were major differences between Dutch versus Romanian actors in terms of motivations, cognitions and resources. In general, Dutch experts wanted to share knowledge and provided most knowledge and financial resources. Romanian actors participated in order to learn and acquire knowledge and to gain (financial and organizational) assistance with problem solving. The country-specific background of both actor groups explains these differences. In terms of problem context, the Netherlands is a densely populated country with low-lying polders in which floods are extremely dangerous. In practice, floods

rarely occur as the country adopted very high safety standards (Van Alphen and Lodder, 2006). In Romania, floods have become a yearly recurring issue during the last decades. They are not only causing major economic damages but also caused an average of thirteen casualties per year between 1969 and 2006 (GoR, 2010). As the intensity and frequency of floods are on the increase, Romanian actors are eager to acquire fresh knowledge about how to solve these problems. Moreover, Romanian actors perceive the Netherlands as one of the most – if not the most – advanced countries in flood risk management.

In the last decades, both countries also went through very different political and economic developments. Shortly after the Second World War, the Netherlands became closely involved in the establishment of the EU whereas Romania was ruled by a communist regime. Since the 1990s, Romania engaged in a transition process that aims to bring the country's political and economic system in line with mainstream European systems (Gallagher, 2005). In economic terms, the gross domestic product of the Netherlands was among the five highest and Romania among the two lowest of all EU member states in the past years (Eurostat, 2012). Being a relatively rich and export-oriented country, international assistance has always had a rather high priority in the Netherlands. This has created the opportunity to also pay for the transfer of knowledge to less developed countries. This financial support is attractive for Romania, which depends heavily on external funds for the implementation of any project. To gain access to funds is especially challenging for local and regional actors who are therefore eager to participate in any project. What also plays a role in this is Romania's wish to 'catch up' with other EU member states (Rose, 1993). In case C, for example, actors also perceived the project as a means to learn from another EU member how to apply for EU funds.

As both countries need to comply with the same EU rules and legislation, their structural context for water management is partly similar. However, there are also differences that form an incentive for knowledge transfer. Especially in case A, actors were very eager to learn about the application of the 'Room for the River' concept or the interactive design method as tools for integrated and participatory water management. The Netherlands is known for developing these ideas and has experimented with them for years (van Ast, 1999; Mostert, 2006), while such approaches are still very new in Romania. Non-governmental organizations, especially, were very interested in such approaches, which are required by various European Directives (including the Flood Directive) but often poorly implemented (Teodosiu, 2007; Teodosiu *et al.*, 2003). Dutch actors perceive the sharing of their knowledge in these domains also as one of their tasks as a more experienced country.

Literature often emphasizes that contextual differences complicate policy transfers (Mossberger and Wolman, 2003; Swainson and de Loe, 2011). However, the case of the Netherlands and Romania shows that

such differences are also an incentive for knowledge transfer and therefore an important source of motivation. However, the cases also show that contextual differences can challenge the effectiveness of such transfers as it implies that actors have different cognitions and resources. In case A, Dutch actors framed flood risks as an urgent problem that was rooted in a lack of space for the river. This cognition was not shared by many of the Romanian actors involved. Only after adjusting the project scope could they arrive at a common goal. The differing problem contexts of both countries provide an explanation for these differing cognitions. While this difference did not affect the effectiveness of this project, differences in terms of structural context were influential. In the Netherlands, 'Room for the River' projects are part of a national programme (Min. V&W, 2006). In Romania, such a programme did not exist and the measures were not sufficiently supported by national actors. As a result, it was not possible to mobilize financial resources for implementation. The effectiveness of case B was especially affected by differences in terms of knowledge resources, which led to problems with the installation of the server and had a negative impact on the effectiveness of the case. The underlying problem was that Dutch experts expected Romanian experts to contribute a slightly different type of technological knowledge than Romanian experts expected to be necessary. In case C, Dutch actors expected – on the basis of their own structural context – that Romanian actors were used to collaborating with each other. Later it appeared that in the Romanian structural context, there was very little interaction between actors with a role in water management. These differences explain why actors understood the meaning of existing master plans only when the project was already halfway complete.

Embedding in the dynamic Romanian context

Analysis of the cases shows that projects that involve the international transfer of knowledge are often less effective than planned. None of the projects contributed directly to the reduction of flood risks and only case B is likely to create follow-up projects for the Dutch water sector. One of the main explanations for these differences is that in cases A and C, there were no powerful players 'pulling-in'. In other words, resourceful actors were not convinced about the need to implement or to elaborate the project results. In case A, a powerful actor (the State Secretary for Water) was involved in project preparations and supported the project idea. However, this national support faded when – following elections – this person was replaced. Also at the regional level, several key actors were replaced following elections. These political changes would not have had such a negative impact on the project if the 'Room for the River' concept had been widely supported. This was not the case since the concept was rather controversial, which made it difficult to raise support for the project

among executives and politicians. This was even more so as the project was finalized in the middle of another election period. A mismatch between the project results and the political context thus explains why resourceful actors would not support the project. What is remarkable is that the process was initially also not supported by regional/local actors. This related to a combination of contextual factors, such as distrust in the government, negative experiences with participation and high dependence on the national government for resources. This negative motivation eventually altered and therefore had no negative impact on the projects' effectiveness.

Case B was implemented in a relatively short period, which is one of the reasons that it was not affected by any changes in the political context. What contributed to the effectiveness of this case was that powerful actors (at the national level) supported the project from the beginning until the end. Improvement of information and warning systems was one of their key priorities and they therefore deliberately looked for ways to integrate a tool like FLIWAS in one of their project proposals. This confirms that transfers are likely to be supported by policymakers – and thus more likely to be implemented – when they are consistent with political consensus (Rose, 1993). In this case, it was also less difficult than in the other cases to embed the project as the project involved several Dutch experts who were familiar with the Romanian context and policy network due to their extensive project experience in the country. However, whether the tool will eventually be used is still to be seen. Experts explained that its actual use may become problematic, among others, because automated measurement stations are not functioning well and end users lack access to modern information and communication means. In other words, they doubt whether the tool fits Romania's technological context.

In case C, the entire project developed very differently than planned. One of the issues during the process was that none of the actors had an adequate insight in relevant policy processes. One of the underlying problems was that there is very little interaction between various Romanian actors with a role in water management. This confirms that incoherent governance may indeed affect project implementation as it leads, among others, to more uncertainty and a failing capacity to recognize win-win situations (De Boer and Bressers, 2011). When information became available, the initial project objective – a master plan – became redundant. However, there were also no project resources to develop a completely different project. Besides this, the project teams also failed to mobilize financial resources for the implementation of their common goal. This failure closely relates to the misfit between the Romanian situation and the integrated and bottom-up project approach. An integrated approach was difficult to realize since European and national funds are not organized in this way. The adoption of a bottom-up approach was also not effective. After the communist period, a decentralization process begun but developed in

a rather inconsistent manner. While competences were transferred to a lower level, associated power and finances were not. The decentralization process also did not account for the lack of expertise and training of local officials (Bădescu *et al.*, 2004). The funding programmes that were of interest in case C were only accessible for regional and national authorities. These actors had not been involved in the project and did not give priority to the problems in the area. What also did not help the mobilization of resources in cases A and C was that national funds decreased considerably as a result of the global economic crisis.

4.6 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter is to provide insight into how contextual factors influence the effectiveness of projects that involve an international knowledge transfer. We conceptualize these projects as actor-interaction processes that are embedded in wider, structural and specific contexts. The Contextual Interaction Theory shows that these contexts only exert an influence on such processes – and their effectiveness – via their influence on the motivations, cognitions and resources of actors involved. To better understand the influence of specific conditions and circumstances, we analysed three Dutch-funded projects that involved the transfer of knowledge about flood risk management from the Netherlands to Romania. Due to contextual differences, there were major differences between Dutch and Romanian actors in terms of motivations, cognitions and resources. These differences provide an incentive to collaborate and therefore an important source of motivation. They also imply that actors have different cognitions and resources, which can result in disagreement and misunderstanding. A further analysis of the projects' embedding into the Romanian context highlights that the effectiveness of the projects was correlated with the involvement and support of national actors. In other words, the cases confirm the importance of powerful players 'pulling-in' (Kroesen *et al.*, 2007). Case C in particular further reveals the fragmented governance setting of Romania as another factor that inhibited a successful knowledge transfer. This finding confirms the notion that fragmented governance may seriously hamper policy implementation and thus effective knowledge transfers (De Boer and Bressers, 2011).

References

- APFM (Associated Programme on Flood Management) (2012) website, www.apfm.info, accessed 27 April 2012.
- Bădescu, G., Sum, P. and Uslander, E.M. (2004) 'Civil society development and democratic values in Romania and Moldova', *East European Politics and Societies*, vol. 18, no. 2, pp. 316–241.

- Bressers, H.T.A. and Kuks, S.M.M. (eds) (2004) *Integrated Governance and Water Basin Management: Conditions for Regime Change towards Sustainability*, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht/Boston, MA/London.
- De Boer, C. and Bressers, H. (2011) *Complex and Dynamic Implementation Processes: The Renaturalization of the Dutch Regge River*, University of Twente, in collaboration with the Dutch Water Governance Centre, Enschede.
- EEA (European Environmental Agency) (2008) 'Impacts of Europe's changing climate: 2008 indicator-based assessment', EEA Report No. 4/2008.
- Eurostat (2012) 'GDP per capita in PPS', online, available at: www.epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&plugin=1&language=en&pcode=tec00114, accessed 22 June 2012.
- Gallagher, T. (2005) *Theft of a Nation: Romania since Communism*, C. Hurst and Co., London.
- GoR (Government of Romania) (2010) 'Strategia Nationala de Management al riscului la inundatii pe termen mediu si lung (National Strategy for Flood Risk Management for the medium and long term) – Annex to Governmental Decision No. 846/2010', *Monitorul Oficial*, vol. 626, no. 6, September 2010.
- Kroesen, O., De Jong, M. and Waaub, J.P. (2007) 'Cross-national transfer of policy models to developing countries: Epilogue', *Knowledge, Technology & Policy*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 137–142.
- Min. V&W ([Dutch] Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management) (2006) 'Spatial Planning Key Decision Room for the River: Approved Decision 16 December 2006', Ministry of Transport Public Works and Water Management, Den Haag, online, available at: www.ruimtevoorderivier.nl/media/21963/pkb%204%20approved%20decision%20h01-h086.pdf, accessed 19 November 2012.
- Min. V&W ([Dutch] Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management) (2009) 'National Water Plan 2009–2015', Ministry of Transport Public Works and Water Management, Den Haag.
- Mossberger, K. and Wolman, H. (2003) 'Policy transfer as a form of prospective policy evaluation: Challenges and recommendations', *Public Administration Review*, vol. 63, no. 4, pp. 428–440.
- Mostert, E. (2006) 'Integrated water resources management in The Netherlands: How concepts function', *Journal of Contemporary Water Research and Education*, vol. 135, no. 1, pp. 19–27.
- Mostert, E., Pahl-Wostl, C., Rees, Y., Searle, B., Tàbara, D. and Tippett, J. (2007) 'Social learning in European river-basin management: Barriers and fostering mechanisms from 10 river basins', *Ecology and Society*, vol. 12, no. 1, art.19.
- Unie van Waterschappen (2005) 'Cooperation between Apele Romane and Dutch Water Boards', Report of visit to the Netherlands, 23–28 October 2005, Unie van Waterschappen, Den Haag.
- Owens, K.A. (2008) 'Understanding how actors influence policy implementation: A comparative study of wetland restorations in New Jersey, Oregon, The Netherlands and Finland', PhD thesis, University of Twente at Enschede.
- Rist, S., Chiddambaranathan, M., Escobar, C. and Wiesmann, U. (2006) "It was hard to come to mutual understanding...": The multidimensionality of social learning processes concerned with sustainable natural resource use in India, Africa and Latin America', *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, vol. 19, no. 3, pp. 219–237.

- RNE and EVD (Royal Netherlands Embassy and Agency for International Business and Cooperation) (2009) 'Environment and Water Projects in Romania', 3rd edition, April 2009, Royal Netherlands Embassy and Agency for International Business and Cooperation, Bucharest, Den Haag.
- Rose, R. (1993) *Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy: A Guide to Learning across Space and Time*, Chatham House Publishers, Chatham, NJ.
- Samuels, P., Klijn, F. and Dijkman, J. (2006) 'An analysis of the current practice of policies on river flood risk management in different countries', *Irrigation and Drainage*, vol. 55, no. S1, pp. 141–150.
- Sehring, J. (2009) 'Path dependencies and institutional bricolage in post-Soviet water governance', *Water Alternatives*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 61–81.
- Stone, D. (1999) 'Learning lessons and transferring policy across time, space and disciplines', *Politics*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp. 51–59.
- Swainson, R. and de Loe, R.C. (2011) 'The importance of context in relation to policy transfer: A case study of environmental water allocation in Australia', *Environmental Policy and Governance*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 58–69.
- Teodosiu, C. (2007) 'Challenges for integrated water resources management in Romania', *Environmental Engineering and Management Journal*, vol. 6, no. 5, pp. 363–374.
- Teodosiu, C., Barjoveanu, G. and Teleman, D. (2003) 'Sustainable water resources management I. River basin management and the EC Water Framework Directive', *Environmental Engineering and Management Journal*, vol. 2, no. 4, pp. 377–394.
- United Nations (2008) *Map No. 3661 Rev. 5*. Department of Field Support, Cartographic Section.
- Van Alphen, J. and Lodder, Q. (2006) 'Integrated flood management: Experiences of 13 countries with their implementation and day-to-day management', *Irrigation and Drainage*, vol. 55, no. S1, pp. S159–S171.
- van Ast, J.A. (1999) 'Trends towards interactive water management: Developments in international river basin management', *Physics and Chemistry of the Earth, Part B*, vol. 24, no. 6, pp. 597–602.
- Van Peppen, D. (2008) 'Concept strategie NWP Roemenie Platform [Draft strategy NWP Romania Platform]', Netherlands Water Platform (NWP), Den Haag.
- Vinke-de Kruijff, J. (2011a) 'The role of Dutch expertise in Romanian water projects: Case study "Pilot implementation FLIWAS in Banat region, Romania"', CE&M research report 2011R-02/WEM-002, University of Twente, Enschede.
- Vinke-de Kruijff, J. (2011b) 'The role of Dutch expertise in Romanian water projects: Case study "Room for the River in Cat's bend, Romania"', CE&M research report 2011R-001/WEM-001, University of Twente, Enschede.
- Vinke-de Kruijff, J. (2012) 'The role of Dutch expertise in Romanian water projects: Case study "Integrated Water Management in the Tecucel River Basin"', CE&M research report 2012R-001/WEM-001, ISSN 1568-4652, University of Twente, Enschede.
- Vinke-de Kruijff, J., Augustijn, D.C.M. and Bressers, J.T.A. (2012) 'Evaluation of policy transfer interventions: lessons from a Dutch–Romanian planning project', *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*, vol. 14, no. 2, pp. 139–160.
- Vinke-de Kruijff, J., Hulscher, S.J.M.H. and Bressers, J.T.A. (2011) 'Knowledge transfer in international cooperation projects: experiences from a Dutch–Romanian project', Conference Paper, 5th International Conference on Flood Risk Management (ICFM5), 27–29 September, Tokyo.

- WMO (World Meteorological Organization) (2009) 'Integrated flood management: Concept paper', WMO-No. 1047, World Meteorological Organization, Geneva.
- Yin, R.K. (2009) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA