Two-way communication

Abbreviations
OiB: Odling i Balans
Eider example: the Weidelandschaft Eidertal project
Single letters H,T,J,B refer to the interviewee

2.8.1 Communication

As has been established, communication is defined as the exchange of information (Oxford Dictionaries 2013).

In the past communication has been described as having four main elements, the source, message, medium/channel and receiver, (Janse 2006; Janse 2008; Flor 2004); this is known as the SMCR model (Flor 2004). Although this simplified model provides an overview of basic communication components, it is a linear representation, is vertical (source – receiver) and therefore based on dependency on the source, not taking into account the actual interdependent relationship between the "source" and "receiver", assuming the passive reception of the message (Flor 2004). Essentially this model is linear, and one-way.

Contention between the definition of communication being a one or two way process, occurs within the literature, with two-way communication being labelled "participation" by some (Reed 2008). In the context of this thesis, communication will refer to a process which is two-way in which the receiver is not passive but also an active provider of information (Janse 2006; U. Rammert, 2013, pers. comm.). This model of communication is known as the Convergence Model (Kincaid, cited in Flor 2004), and depicts communication as having no specific source and receiver, but as having co-equal participants involved in a cyclic and interactive process, occurring over time. The aim of communication implied by this model is mutual understanding (Flor 2004). The Convergence Model of Communication depicts most accurately, the flow of two-way communication.

Flor (2004) calls for two-way communication that encompasses participation of the receiver, enabling and empowering the receivers to become actively involved in the process, becoming participants themselves.

Communication is also influenced by external context, that is the setting of the communication socially and situationally (Janse 2006), and by the internal context, that is based on the receiver's personal experience, prior knowledge and values (Janse 2006; Jurin et al. 2010). This internal context is important and highlights the need to ensure the recipient has the ability to contemplate and analyse the content of the message (Janse 2008). Keeping in mind that the SMCR model is flawed, the SMCR model, the Convergence Model of Communication and the knowledge of external and internal context can be used to provide an overview of areas in which communication problems may occur.

Successful communication is stated as occurring when the message is fully understood by the recipient (Jurin et al. 2010). Alternatively according to the Convergence Model of Communication, successful communication occurs when mutual understanding is reached (Flor 2004). In either case, misunderstandings during communication are due to "noise", these do not necessarily have to be sounds, but are any issues which may result in misunderstanding or incomprehension of a message (Jurin et al. 2010). Many of the problems outlined in the next section can be considered noise. Although the Convergence Model of Communication emphasises the equality of both participants and makes no distinction between source and receiver (Flor 2004), other sources state that in a communications process the responsibility rests with the source (or communicator) who takes responsibility should communication fail via incomprehension of the message or misunderstandings (Jurin et al. 2010). It is hard to marry these two differing ideas, perhaps due to the many different ways communication can take place; once again this seems to be due to the contention between a linear one-way model, or an interactive cyclical and bi-directional model.

2.8.1 Environmental Communication

Environmental Communication is the exchange of all forms of environmental information (Flor 2004), the way in which we build understanding of the environment and human relationships to the natural world (Jurin et al. 2010), or alternatively the study of the way communication about the environment takes place (Jurin et al. 2010). Definitions vary from source to source.

Within agri-environmental projects much of the communication taking place is environmental communication. It must be noted that this can be viewed from either a micro (between individuals) or macro-communication (between different *stakeholder groups*) perspective (Jurin et al. 2010).

Ter Mors et al. (2010) outlines the need for the kind of communication that aims to provide information about environmental issues, in order to raise awareness and develop a "deeper understanding" of complex environmental issues in the receiver. This is called *informative communication*, and is important to provide to the public because without knowledge and awareness about an issue, successful action cannot take place (Ter Mors et al. 2010).

The interface between forest policy decision-makers and researchers is wrought with contention over the provision and use of relevant research (Janse 2008). Decision-makers believe researchers do not work on relevant topics or supply the needed information; researchers believe decision-makers do not understand the information, nor will they make the effort to try, and do not take the "best available" scientific information into account when making decisions (Janse 2008). In order to resolve this, improved communication between policy-makers and researchers is needed, which will improve the science/policy interface (Janse 2008). It must also be noted that the structure of the communication process is thought to be a contributor to effective dialogue needed to develop sound policy (Janse 2006). Communication is also considered by some as a means of bridging the science-policy gap (Guldin 2003).

Within top-down structured projects (often those that are policy driven) the standardized and formalized system of project planning is too rigid to allow for productive and successful communication (Rammert 2012).

Davies & White (2012) acknowledges communication (along with trust) as an enabler of effective collaborative partnerships.

The need for an increase in communication between science and the rest of society is recognised in order to firstly fulfil the public's need for a "greater accountability" of science, and secondly due to the increased requirement (from funding agencies) for researchers to consult stakeholders during phases of research projects (Welp et al. 2006). This communication is referred to as "science-based stakeholder dialogues" by Welp et al. (2006). This communication is outlined as important for providing scientists with real-world relevant research questions, for a "reality check" regarding research underway resulting in stakeholders being more inclined to utilise results. It introduces ethical considerations and finally provides scientists with access to important knowledge and data held by the stakeholders (Welp et al. 2006). Science-based stakeholder dialogues aim to combine the knowledge of the scientific community and that of society or stakeholders, essentially acting as an interface combining two knowledge domains (Welp et al. 2006).

Hahn et al. (2006) suggests that the communication of ecological knowledge (*informative communication*) to stakeholders within the projects of Ecomuseum Kristianstads Vattenrike, a small municipal organisation, has had positive effects on facilitated conflict resolution, trust building, and changing the internal values or attitudes of stakeholders (Hahn et al. 2006).

4.4.1 Communication rectification (Two-Way communication)

As outlined in the introduction section dedicated to communication; by definition communication is a two-way flow of information (Flor 2004); in the past top-down projects have resulted in a one-way communication process (orders received and carried out with no feedback), which has over time resulted in a distortion in communication carried out between

stakeholder groups (U. Rammert, 2013, pers. comm.). The rectification of the communications process rendering it two-way as opposed to one way will weaken the language barrier and work towards bettering the state of all other themes (communication problems) (U. Rammert, 2013, pers. comm.). The complex influences that two-way communication has on bettering other suggestion codes and themes described above are illustrated in *Fig. 3.*

The code associated with this suggestion is *two-way communication*, which occurs under all themes representing problem areas in communication. This code relates directly to the communication process.

Communication rectification (Two-Way communication) in the Examples

Within OiB, as has been previously mentioned, *two-way communication* is present between all participating stakeholders and stakeholder groups, however the length that this organisation has existed must be noted (1991-present) and therefore the time it has taken to set up this kind of communication cycle. For example, when asked how the relationship with the university was built up, whereby OiB sends ideas to the university, instigates research and is involved in the research process from its start, H replied it takes 10-12 years.

In the Latvian example, and Latvia in general, it seems there is a lack of two-way communication, especially with regards to the scientific community, and indeed even the possibility of a lack of communication entirely. A real rectification of communication processes is needed.

The Eider example prioritized communication and through the introduction of intense participation at “round tables” a *two-way communication* cycle was initiated and set up. Once again the timespan over which this project took place is relevant (1999-2004). B emphases that this process took a long time, and a lot of hard work.

In setting up a two-way communications process many other factors, listed as codes in the template, come into play, illustrating the interrelatedness of the codes, such as *respect, reputation and trust*, *empowerment* and many others.

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Author: Sara Jones

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