

KNOWLEDGE CAFé's

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Report to the
Water Research Commission

by

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Thank you to the Water Research Commission for the opportunity to develop
the Knowledge Café

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1. Knowledge Café Purpose

The purpose of the Knowledge Café (KC) is to discover common values and mutual ground through interactive dialogue and powerful questioning to:

- Promote ideals for sustainable water resource management
- Bring together ‘experts’ and young professionals
- Promote a shared vision of what ground water management means within a developing country context
- Pull a diverse range of stakeholders into an interactive framework
- Promote ideals of action and opportunities rather than inertia in implementing ground water management
- Level the playing fields and provide a sharper tool for the co-creation of knowledge
- Give precise meaning to vague ideas of participation
- Promote an innovative and creative ‘Café’ format that serves as a tool to narrow the gap between progressive IWRM policy and its practical application in South Africa and the region

2. Envisaged outcomes

The KC aims to build equitable stakeholder relationships for the promotion of IWRM and to present alternative dialogue opportunities. The purpose of these alternative dialogue opportunities is to level the playing fields between diverse stakeholders because we believe that unequal relationships of power obstruct the flow of ideas and knowledge sharing and thus restrict innovation and problem-solving. The design of this dialogue takes cognizance of cultural variability and prior-related knowledge. In so doing it provides a scaffold to booster the notion of multi-stakeholder participation in water resource management. It allows for meaningful dialogue between stakeholders and narrows the gap between rhetoric and the practical application of one of the core principles of IWRM, namely that those closest to the resource should be involved in the decision making processes around how this resource is controlled, managed, conserved and so forth. This document constitutes the final report on the Knowledge Café’s, a project funded by

the Water Research Commission and implemented by the University of the Western Cape's Integrated Water Resource Management Programme. It provides literature and a theoretical framework for the project and it critically examines the achievement of the project, in particular the four Knowledge Cafés (KCs) that have been implemented. It provides an assessment of the opportunities and weaknesses of the KC and suggests whether and in what ways KCs, as conceived in this project, can best promote the anticipated outcomes as outlined in the KC's purpose above. The report concludes that KCs can serve as a powerful vehicle for multi stakeholder dialogue and for the co-creation of knowledge. For this reason they are proposed as a tool for narrowing the gap between water policy (rhetoric) and its practical application.

3. Knowledge Café Practical Considerations

The Knowledge Café (KC) has been described in the literature as a type of business meeting or organizational workshop that aims to provide an open and creative conversation on a topic of mutual interest.¹ During this conversation, collective knowledge, shared ideas and insights surface and participants gain a deeper understanding of the subject that is being discussed and of the issues that emerge around that topic.

A radical appraisal of the paradigm of participation is critical and it is this rationale that prompted the design of a dialogue and learning tool such as the KC. The KC is part of the 'how' collective knowledge, shared ideas and insights can surface. The design of the Knowledge Café aims to sharpen the toolkit for including people in decision-making and to provide an innovative and creative site for meaningful dialogue. In the long run, a more frequent and persistent application of KC (and other types of forums such as the KC) is likely to open up spaces for real dialogue and problem solving for the sector. New mechanisms are required so that meaningful transfers of knowledge and meaningful exchanges can replace mediocre attempts to bring people

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_Cafe. The idea originated with David Gurteen but it shares features with The World Cafe, a conversational process that originated during a strategic dialogue with the Intellectual Capital Pioneers at the home of Juanita Brown and David Isaacs, and subsequently developed by the global World Café community of practice. This is a 'popular' reference but the Café's seem not to have elicited scholarly literature. This WRC report contributes to a growing body of knowledge on communication tools and the Knowledge Café is one, amongst many other, such tools

into decision-making processes relying on stale environments where, despite rhetoric to the contrary, nothing has changed at all.

The objective of using the KC format for the water sector is to build equitable stakeholder relationships and to present an alternative format for dialogue that levels the playing fields and that promotes a space where there can be a more equitable flow of knowledge between people who have varied levels of experience and practice. It is fundamental that knowledge² is shared because knowledge is central in determining who can benefit from which resources and also because shared knowledge becomes pivotal in ensuring that the principles of IWRM are adhered to (Goldin, 2010).

Meaningful dialogue is much more likely to happen when people feel at ease with one another and when there are more equal relationships of power. When there is a more equal distribution of power there is also likely to be a more constructive process of problem-solving and dialogue. One of the strongest features of the KC format is that it is designed to level the playing field between all participants. Within this context, no one voice resonates louder than another and cultural variability as well as prior-related knowledge is recognized. No single knowledge set or cultural insight is more powerful or important than another.

Knowledge building flourishes with a proper mix of an enabling environment, the right questions being asked and the opportunity to explore solutions creatively and without inhibition. IWRM relies on stakeholders closest to the point of extraction and use of the resource being part the decision making process about the resource. This implies an active and alert civil society who are willing and able to co-create knowledge and who maximize their capacity for sharing local knowledge and gaining technical or new knowledge. Such a co-creation of knowledge allows for building and sustaining trust and respect and produces a kind of social capital that is a prerequisite for change and transformation in the water sector. Meaningful knowledge transfers are critical capacity building blocks. People who understand and share information in a comfortable setting are likely to build trust between one another and feel good about themselves.

² We use knowledge and information interchangeably here although there is a distinction between knowledge and information that is discussed below under the subheading conceptual issues/terminology

In turn, it is more likely that these people will willingly engage with the core challenges of implementing IWRM.

There are barriers to acquiring knowledge. The knowledge that is made available to many of the stakeholders who are brought together because they are supposedly involved in the practical application of IWRM principles, is often scientific³ and difficult to grasp for people who do not have specialized scientific know-how. Information that is shared in so many of the forums is devoted to the protection, use, development, conservation, management and control of the resource and it is riddled with this scientific and often inaccessible jargon. In order for the technical information to have practical meaning, those involved in the process need to be able to take what is useful for them and to apply it practically. People who are drawn into these forums expect that there will be an opportunity to learn about what works and what does not work for them. In other words the knowledge that is necessary to know what works and what does not work for a particular stakeholder group needs to be supplied in such a way that it can be used. There is another body of ‘expert’ and ‘scientific’ knowledge and that is the knowledge that is generated about society and about the spaces that people need to have so that they can flourish and exercise their right to decision-taking. In an environment where the playing fields are leveled and where there is an opportunity for the co-creation of knowledge, government officials and experts with technical know-how are able to benefit because they learn about people. This is because the technocrats can experience a space where dialogue is exchanged in a ‘new way’ that is not ‘top-down.’ This ‘new way’ allows officials to experience how different types of knowledge can be transferred and how their own knowledge can be better packaged and made more accessible to all. Government officials and technical experts require better people skills and a better understanding of the dynamics around top-down, bottom-up knowledge transfers. The lay person also requires a better understanding of how government and technical experts think.

There are numerous occasions where stakeholders get together to discuss the pressing needs of water but it is not easy to equalize the playing fields when people with very different skills, experience and needs are brought together in formal and restrictive settings. Too often in formal settings there are unequal relations of power and unequal access to knowledge.

³ We mean here technical and ‘western’ knowledge because local knowledge is also ‘scientific’

3.1. Capacity Building

The KC is a tool for engaging diverse groups with the purpose of building the capacity of these individuals and groups around water management. Five points about capacity building are pertinent (see box 1).

Box One: Five key points about capacity building

- 1) Capacity is the ability of individuals, groups, institutions and organisations to identify and solve problems over time (Morgan, 1993; UNDP, 1993)
- 2) Capacity is the ability to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably. This implies that capacity is not a passive state but that it is part of an active process (Hildebrand and Grindle, 1994)
- 3) Emergent properties, such as capacity, come from the dynamism of the interrelationships in the system. The challenge is not so much to build or enhance them as it is to unleash them or find ways to encourage their emergence (Morgan, 2005).
- 4) ‘Capacity development is a long-term process. It eludes delivery pressures, quick fixes and the search for short-term results’⁴
- 5) The second is ‘scan locally and globally; reinvent locally – there are no blueprints. Capacity development draws upon voluntary learning, with genuine commitment and interest. Knowledge cannot be transferred, it needs to be acquired.’

Source: Blokland, Alaerts and Kaspersma, 2009

The points highlighted in box one, emphasize the active engagement of participants and the dynamic nature of relationships. The KC is able to unleash the dynamic aspect of relationships and it encourages the emergence of dynamic relationships between people. Point four implies that the development of capacity requires tools – such as the KC where the ‘game’ that is played is part of the process and should not be seen as a quick fix solution to the building of capacity. The game allows for elements expressed in point five as voluntary learning where – while playing the game, there is genuine commitment and interest problem-solving.

The activist Robert Chambers pioneered participatory methods and capacity building techniques to deepen democratic processes from the bottom up. Capacity building is intertwined with ideas

⁴ The UNDP (2003) identified 10 default principles for capacity development and the points four and five in Box One reflect two of these that are particularly relevant to the Knowledge Café idea of co-creating knowledge

of empowerment and because the core idea behind IWRM is decentralization, the following quote from Chambers (2001) is pertinent:

“Decentralization means that resources and discretion are devolved, turning back the inward and upward flows of resources and people. Empowerment means that people, especially poorer people, are enabled to take more control over their lives, and secure a better livelihood with ownership and control of productive assets as one key element. Decentralization and empowerment enable local people to exploit the diverse complexities of their own conditions, and to adapt to rapid change” (Chambers, 2001)

Notions of agency are intimately connected to features of power, knowledge and participation (Giddens, 1990; Desai, 1994; Offe, 1997) and Goldin (2010) makes the linkages between knowledge, power and agency explicit. A short discussion on knowledge and conditions for knowledge generation follows.

3.2 Knowledge⁵

Knowledge is dynamic because it changes as new information is loaded into a knowledge management repository. Knowledge can be generated through both formal and informal systems. Formal systems of learning such as schools, colleges and technical institutes, generate a critical mass of knowledge. Alongside the formal institutions of learning, there are informal methods of assimilating knowledge such as learning-by-doing, learning from peers, learning networks and knowledge acquisition through the media. All of these – and often combinations of these methods – contribute to the way we see the world and manage information about it. Different external sources enter into our repository of experience and learning and contribute to the critical mass of material that equips individuals and groups to make sense of the world and to learn what works and what does not work. As we organize the different facts and data that we acquire we are able to take decisions and to take our place in society as responsive and responsible citizens.

⁵ See footnote 4

Formal systems can stifle or foster/nurture knowledge building. The way information is shared with individuals or groups in informal or/and formal settings can create opportunities for integration and empowerment of those individuals and groups or it can alienate and create barriers between individuals and groups. In-group/out-group dynamics are common because some, but not all, are able to use the knowledge. Different people receive knowledge differently and for some certain forms of knowledge are accessible – while for others these same forms are not. The way in which knowledge is made available for some – but not all - can be either deliberate or unintentional on the part of the person delivering that knowledge. Intentional barriers occur when those with knowledge use the knowledge to alienate some from resources whilst intensifying benefits for others to those same resources. In this instance, knowledge barriers are not benign. More commonly in the water sector, barriers are unintentional and they are perpetuated through ignorance. These barriers unintentionally create in-group/out-group dynamics that are not easily reversed. Insofar as these barriers prohibit equal access to facts that are required for decision-making processes, they create favorable conditions for some, rather than all, to participate meaningfully in collective decision-making.

Barriers are not likely to dissolve unless they are recognized as barriers and deliberate efforts are made to remove them and to reverse in-group/out-group dynamics. Deliberate efforts require tools that penetrate spaces between people, level the playing fields as much as possible and create enabling spaces for groups to reconfigure and reconstruct themselves differently. There are tools that are designed for adult education methods, for instance those designed by educational activists such as Paulo Freire, in the 1980s. Robert Chambers, inspired by activist Indian methods of practitioners such as James Mascarenhas (1990) and Singh (2001) also developed adult education tools, including participatory rural appraisal, action research and dynamic participatory action group forums.

The performance of individuals is bettered where individuals are able to risk innovative responses to problem solving and where new knowledge can be presented or old knowledge retrieved. As Alaerts and Kaspersma (2009) posit, the water sector is knowledge intensive and this calls for an investment in the creation of new knowledge through research and innovation. Learning requires more than just a set of facts to be presented and the co-creation of knowledge

is likely to bring the best results. Charves and Garcia (2009) present a case study for knowledge management at the community level in Colombia and they argue that the more diverse the communication strategy, the more likely it is that information will be communicated. Charves and Garcia (2009) claim

‘it is becoming more and more necessary to apply communication resources and information and communication technologies to the water and sanitation sector; furthermore this presents an opportunity for all social actors within the sector to express themselves and be informed, and to let others know about all those circumstances in which water, sanitation and health play an influential role’ (2009:107).

Knowledge is about knowing – and knowing empowers individuals and groups.

3.3 Knowledge generation and capacity building come together

The Knowledge Café is a capacity building tool. The strength of the Knowledge Café lies in its ability to conjure curiosity and to recreate a non-threatening ‘play’ environment where individuals are caught off guard and the serious matter of water management becomes, for a few hours, less serious. The significance of bringing water management issues into the realm ‘game’ is not to trivialize water management but to allow for ‘out of the box’ solutions. The scenarios that have been developed for the ‘game’ are close enough to real life to be recognized as serious. The players, recognize the realistic enough scenarios and are able to sense the urgency and earnestness with which they must reinvent themselves and bring about change. The locus of control is around the table and not elsewhere. The strength of the game is that it triggers or unleashes power for those who often feel powerless when faced with ‘big’ ‘real life’ water management issues. The game creates a space where, for a few hours, everyone feels that they have control and where power relations are equal. In their discussion on the conceptual framework behind the role-playing game, KatAware, a Water Research Commission Project, that was developed in the Kat River, Desole *et al.* (2005) make the following observation:

We all make experiences every day. Meeting people, watching a movie, driving our car are all experiences that leave a footprint in our memory and therefore have an impact on

our behaviour. From experiences we learn how to behave through a ‘learning by doing’ process

4. Rules of the game

The Knowledge Café provides a friendly space where participants are invited to solve a problem that has everything to do with water management. There has been no precedent for KCs in the water sector.⁶ The KC activities that were implemented within the context of the WRC Knowledge Café series are innovative and involve a number of steps:

- Identifying stakeholders
- Identifying and briefing facilitators
- Designing KC’s event’s content and logistics
- Inviting participants
- Grouping participants around tables – no more than 8 per table
- Identifying an enabler and a scribe for each group
- Introducing the Knowledge Bucket as an ice-breaker
- Presenting scenarios for each table
- Allocating vouchers/resources to each table
- Setting up a shop where vouchers/resources can be bartered or bought
- Facilitating the KC
- Reporting back from each table of resolutions/solutions/opportunities
- Documenting procedures – text and visuals

The goal of a KC is to bring together as many different players around a small table for a ‘conversation’ around a chosen topic. Stakeholders are typically selected from the following groups:

⁶ Water Dialogue has initiated a series of workshops but the KC format has not, at least to our knowledge, been applied within this context

- Government – senior officials and junior professionals from sectors such as health, water, education, environment
- Academia – professors and students from sectors such as health, water, education, environment
- Communities – counselors, grass roots workers, facilitators
- NGOs and other civil society groups

The idea is to try as best as possible to mix and match ‘experts’ (e.g. senior lecturer/professor level, with students (post doc and undergraduate) and to bring together as diverse a set of actors as possible to address the water problem given to the table. A facilitator (or facilitators) helps participants at each table tap into their own knowledge and wisdom so that the problem at hand can be solved with the available resources.

- 1) Each table is covered with a Knowledge Café table cloth. This brands the ‘game’ and creates an unusual but organized space that is inviting and unifying – all tables have the same design on their table cloth



Pre Knowledge Café – preparation. A KC table -cloth is spread out on each table as well as a Knowledge Bucket (ice-breaker exercise). Participants are asked to put any problem they can conceive of that has to do with water into the Knowledge Bucket. The bucket is then taken to an adjacent table and the participants sitting around that table take out the problems from the bucket and have to find solutions to those problems. The ice-breaker is introduced as an exercise where participants can talk about problems because the remaining Café activities are all around solutions. The Knowledge Bucket ice-breaker is 10 minutes long.

- 2) Each table has a Knowledge Café bag. The bag contains tokens (resources) as well as a list of resources that are available to each table. Each token has a point value. Some resources are worth a lot more than others – for instance a mobile clinic, a greenhouse or an internet hub costs 3000 points whilst poles, fences and smaller items are valued much lower, around 50 points each. Available resources include livestock, manual labour, consultant time, fences, poles and so forth.



Each resource has a corresponding value. The resource guide shows all the available resources and their corresponding values. One table might have resources that it doesn't need and may also be short of vital resources for solving its problem. These resources can be obtained either at the shop or at a neighboring table. Tokens can be bartered or bought with the available points

- 3) The bag also contains a scenario and this is the problem that the tables need to solve with their given resources. Each table is given the same points (3000 points), made up of a variety of resources
- 4) The tables have two opportunities to purchase or swap additional resources from the 'shop' but they are encouraged to swap with neighbouring communities (tables) rather than purchase at the shop. There is a disincentive to go the shop (rather than a neighbouring table) and they forfeit 50 points if they do so



Participants at the 'shop' negotiating exchanges or new resources with their available points

- 5) The participants have 10 minutes to examine the resources that they have been given and to read the problem statement (scenario) that is inside their bag



Knowledge Café 'Bag' that is filled with token (resources) plus the resource guide and scenario card

- 6) Tables are deliberately given resources that they will not need and that do not match their problem statement – for instance one problem statement could simulate an urban setting where taps are leaking. It is unlikely that this community will need the goats or other livestock that they have in their Knowledge Bag and they are likely to want to swap these resources for more appropriate resources that they can use to solve their problem



Resource guide reflecting available resources and corresponding value

Everyone around the table is encouraged to participate. At each KC there has been remarkable participation and participants become vocal and active because the resources are 'alive' and because the process requires practical – not theoretical – skills to solve the

problem. There is a buzz in the room as participants swap resources, find solutions, consult the panel of judges and so forth.



The fourth Knowledge Café was held at the University of the Western Cape

7) Each table then presents its solution to the problem



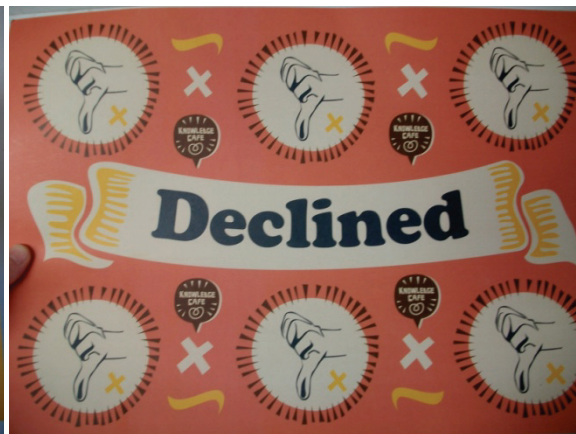
The tables design their practical solutions for a given IWRM problem

The table makes an argument for why the solution to the given water problem is valid.



A convincing argument is made for why a particular solution is valid and why that solution to a given water resource problem can be justified as reasonable, practical and sustainable

- 8) The participants then vote and decide whether the solution is accepted or rejected



5. Summative remarks

The game is not only fun but importantly, it is designed to stimulate thinking about environmental issues and water resources management. The game serves as an ideal entry point to integrated water resources management. It sets a precedent for participatory practice and establishes the ground rules for a learning environment. In this way it provides a 'learning by doing' environment. The playing field is leveled between different role players, for instance civil society/government and policy makers and the different players get to know one another. The Knowledge Café is down to earth and it can provide a healthy alternative to highly technical information sharing sessions that are all too often alienating for so many of the stakeholders.

The knowledge café has been developed both as an educational tool and as a pre-decision making tool for water resources management. The KC tool can also be used for ‘real’ decision making. In this case new scenarios that are real life scenarios and real life site specific resources can be drawn as a follow up to the initial ‘game.’ The preparatory ‘pre-packaged scenarios’ provide a preliminary pathway that introduces stakeholders to one another and paves the way for problem solving and dialogue enhancing alternatives.

CMAs and WUAs have been charged with the onerous task of putting in motion participatory decision- making and of facilitating knowledge sharing among water users who have different socio-economic characteristics, unequal access to information and knowledge and varied skills in negotiating or lobbying for their cause. The development of the model AWARE (Action research and Watershed Analysis for Resource and Economic sustainability) that was mentioned above, was applied in the Kat River catchment and it follows a scientific posture called Companion Modelling (ComMod). According to this approach:

“Stakeholders learn collectively by creating, modifying, and observing simulations. When carrying out simulations, one acts on the decision-making process by creating or modifying representations. ComMod leads stakeholders to share representations and simulations taking into account possible decisions and actions (management rules, new infrastructures, etc.) that are under consideration within their own environment (Farolfi and Rowntree, 2005)

The idea of a Knowledge Café as one of the many possible ways to narrow the gap between IWRM policy and its practical application is entirely innovative. The strength of the KC is that it is able to:

- 1) create a relaxed environment where people think ‘out of the box’
- 2) level the playing field around a table so that those with ‘technical’ or ‘scientific’ knowledge are not ‘superior’ to those with ‘local’ and ‘subjective’ knowledge
- 3) ‘mimic’ real life water problems so that real life water solutions can be explored
- 4) adjust the pre-packed scenarios so that the KC can be used in real life situations
- 5) introduce individuals/groups to ideas behind integrated water resource management without ever ‘boxing’ the idea and labeling it

- 6) encourage innovation in problem solving around IWRM
- 7) recognize that there are limited resources for solving problems and that working together as a group is likely to bring the 'best' solution possible
- 8) level the playing fields
- 9) introduce people with conflicting interests to each other in a non-threatening environment

The idea of the KC advanced from one Café to the next. The first one was the most exploratory and the last one the most definitive. The KC as a game is now ready to be branded, packaged and rolled out.

6. Appendix One: Reporting on the Cafés

Café One held at the News Café in Midrand, Johannesburg. 40 participants

The strategy used for the first Café was to set up small tables for conversations. This format is based on the original concept of a Knowledge Café where the idea is to keep the conversation as free as possible and to create a Café atmosphere that is conducive to informal conversations. There are some guiding questions and rules a) there should be no more than 6 – 8 people around a table b) only one person speaks at the table at a time and no-one interrupts until that person has said everything she/he wanted to say c) the setting is one of a café where there is coffee available d) blank newspaper is laid out on each table and used for taking notes or 'scribbling' e) the conversation is not guided and the idea is that 'whatever happens is what is meant to happen' f) each table has a host who does not move from that table g) after twenty minutes all the actors, except the host, move to another table that has been assigned to them h) the host sums up the main points of the conversation that took place at his/her table and the new actors take up the conversation that was taking place at the host's table.

Observations on Café One

There were 8 'café' tables with high bar stools around each table. Five participants were assigned to each table. The News Café at Midrand is an unusual venue to have a water conversation and the participants were presented with an 'out of the box' situation that was informal, welcoming and conducive to conversations on the topic of IWRM. The café was well attended by students and senior academics as well as experts and young professionals from the water sector. One of the obstacles to the conversations was that many actors did not know about IWRM and too much time was spent on unpacking IWRM principles. The discussions

remained vague because participants from non-water sectors could not engage meaningfully with discussions around water.

Recommendation from Café One

Venue too noisy and music from the News Café itself penetrated into the conversations: the conversations should be more guided: unnecessary funds were spent on a scribe for each table – the scribes were from an employment agency and were not familiar with the jargon and were unable to follow the conversations. Proceeding recordings were poor. The Café budget was exceeded because of high facilitation fees, costly refreshments, unnecessary ‘frills’ such as flowers, venue hire and unnecessary scribe fees.

Café Two: The Assembly, Cape Town – 120 participants

The second café adopted an appreciative inquiry approach. This approach uses a specific interviewing technique called the free attitude interview. This allows for discussions guided by affinity diagrams and problem solving and it sets a logical sequence for interactive dialogue. It opens with an exercise which is to create a ‘dream’ scenario. The idea for this Café was to make sure that the dialogue was not left open and that the sessions were well structured and guided.

Observations on Café Two

The Assembly is an edgy – out of the box venue. It is a night club and this setting was exciting and helped to level the playing fields because senior ‘experts’ were confronted with a setting that was so unfamiliar to them that they were ‘out of their comfort zone’ and they did not have any comparative advantage over any other participant because of this. Lessons learnt from the first Café served well and the strategy to structure dialogue and not leave the discussions open-ended was productive. Because there were far more people attending, it was possible to mix and match and ensure a diverse group around each table (NGO’s, students, senior academics, government, CBOs). Each table selected their own ‘host’ and ‘scribe.’ The Café opened with a panel of 8 experts who were asked to talk on issues pertaining to the water sector (water and health, IWRM, ground water, water quality, education, working for water and sanitation). The panel presentations were followed by the first exercise which was designed as an open ended question (10 minutes discussion): ‘what is your dream’. This was a ‘think big’ question and required creative imagination with a vision of what an ideal society would look like in terms of water. The dreams were written down on ‘stick on’ pads and read out loud. This was a positive way to start the session and the dreams provided a ‘best possible’ scenario. The issue of water quality was high on the agenda. Session two (10 minutes) was the ‘problem session.’ Participants were asked to identify problems in their communities and it was a ‘moan and groan’ session. The problems were written down. Session three and four (30 minutes each) were set aside to solve the

problems. The participants moved from one table to the next after session three. The hosts remained seated at their tables. The participants were encouraged to use real life situations outside of the water sector where problem solving was successful. In other words they were asked to identify positive community responses to real life concerns that were not necessarily about water. They were encouraged to unpack the conditions that had resulted in positive responses – for instance social cohesion, good leadership – and to use these experiences to solve the problems presented on the table that were specific to the water sector.

Recommendation from Café Two

The self selection of hosts and scribes by the table resulted in some hosts not having the strengths needed to guide the dialogues around the table and to report back adequately to the new comers to their table as participants moved from one table to another. Too many general questions were time consuming at Café One where questions were often very basic ones as participants were not all from the water sector and were not familiar with concepts such as IWRM. Time was wasted on providing basic information on IWRM. To avoid this at the second Café, a panel of experts was invited to present a short overview of a wide range of pertinent water issues. The idea was that those who did not work in the water sector would be taken through the most important issues around IWRM. The panel of experts was not good idea because it took too long and it resulted in a top-down overview – exactly what we wanted to avoid. It was alienating for many who could not understand as the presenters used technical terms and their presentations, although good – were too complex to be understood by everyone. The strategies for promoting dialogue around the table, on the other hand, did work well. The dialogues were stimulating and the atmosphere was exciting and provocative. The ‘buzz’ in the room and the venue itself, helped create the right atmosphere for people to think outside the box. There were 60 participants from grassroots organizations in the townships of Cape Town and 60 participants from tertiary institutions, government and NGOs. There was a well-represented cross section of stakeholders, including organizations that worked with HIV/AIDS, youth groups or education. The selection process for community participants was not stringent enough. Community members who are invited to attend a Café in the future must be screened. One possibility is that interested parties could write a short motivation letter or if illiterate, should draw a picture and motivate why they feel they should be selected to attend the Café. A handful of those who attended were clearly ‘jumping on the band wagon’ and although only a handful, they were disruptive and did not contribute to the conversations. The event at The Assembly was very successful. It was also attended by a high level delegation from the Local Government in Bangladesh accompanied by a World Bank official. These officials were moved by the event and said ‘we have never seen anything like this in our own country.’ Officials had never had the privilege of sitting at the same table with ordinary grass roots people to discuss concerns around water and they were impressed by the idea of the Café and its potential to stimulate dialogue and level the playing fields between government and civil

society. Feedback was very positive from students and the general comment was that ‘this should happen much more.’ See below just one email from a Master’s student at UWC.

I was one of the students from the IWRM program from UWC. I would like to suggest that a monthly report be created with water news on new development or the outcomes from the discussions held. Even a platform for us as students to give comments would be nice, because we learn so much through theories and actually have ideas that might work in reality but we do not have a platform to speak out. We would really like to have regular conversation venues such as the Café at the Assembly

Café Three: The Stable Theatre, Durban: October 2008, 80 participants

The third café was held in a venue that was deliberately chosen because of its symbolic value as a space where political changes happened. This reinforced the idea of change and potential for the dynamic movement of ideas. There were 80 participants. Once again the Café had good cross representation from NGO’s, academics, community members and public officials from the eThekweni Municipality. The session opened with ice-breakers.

Observations from Café Three

The venue was a good choice as it had symbolic meaning and the conversion of the theatre space into a KC worked well. The space accommodated 10 tables. Thinking out the box included bunny-chows for lunch. This was a successful add-on and was well appreciated. The Knowledge Bucket was used as an ice-breaker and it worked very well. Participants were given 5 minutes to ‘throw’ all their problems into a bucket. The buckets were then taken away by a facilitator and placed on an adjacent table. The participants of each table are then given 5 minutes to solve the problems identified by their neighbours. The best solutions were put up in the Knowledge Hall of Fame. The solutions were projected onto a screen. Each table appointed a scribe and a raconteur. Each table had a hand written scenario.

Tables could swap or barter their vouchers with other tables in the room. After 15 minutes the resource table was available and they were allowed to buy or exchange other vouchers. The scenario solution was then presented to a separate table that was made up only of judges. The judges could reject or accept the solution. The tables participated energetically and ran up and down to the resource table with great enthusiasm. The atmosphere was energized and the KC

worked really well. Participants were encouraged to share and barter resources with their neighbours so as to stimulate public dialogue and exchange. It was heartening to see municipal officers running back and forth to the resource table to negotiate exchanges alongside a rural elderly woman or to listen to a professor whose tokens were running dry, trying to bribe the resource table for ‘more water tanks.’ Municipal officers were guided by rural communities and were privy to insights that helped solve the problem.

Recommendations from Café Three

Although the venue was charged with symbolic meaning it was difficult to find. Venues should be easily accessible because Knowledge Café time is lost waiting for participants to find the place. One solution might be to organise transport for the community participants. Transport was organised for Café Two and this worked better. The idea of the Knowledge Bucket that was introduced at the Assembly (Café Two) was taken up again at the Stable Theatre. It works very well as part of the Knowledge Café and it could be branded as part of the ‘game.’ It brings participants right into the realm of water by inviting them to throw their problems into the bucket. It encourages participants to engage with ‘solution-centred’ thinking in contrast to ‘problem-centred’ thinking. It is an appropriate tool to stimulate public dialogue. The idea of a Knowledge Hall of Fame works well and it is recommended that this also becomes part of the KC toolkit. The judges were a resource for tables to consult with and the idea of having a table of ‘experts’ works well. A ‘drum’ was used to mark the end of sessions and to get the attention of the tables. A drum – or castenette – attracts the attention of participants and contributes to the idea of ‘thinking out the box.’ It is also an unconventional time-keeper.

Knowledge Café Four: University of the Western Cape: 40 participants⁷ (August 2010)

All of the participants were post graduate students. The majority were from the post-graduate IWRM programme but a number of other Departments sent students to learn about public dialogue tools. This was the first Café where the printed product was available. The following observations hold true:

⁷ A fourth KC was held in Johannesburg but all narrative information on that event was lost when the author’s laptop was stolen

- ❖ An educational toolkit for schools. It introduces ideas of integrated resources management
- ❖ An introductory awareness raising tool for stakeholders. It introduces stakeholders to the idea of integrated water resources management and smoothes the way for stakeholders to get to know each other and to dialogue with one another in a non-threatening environment
- ❖ A problem solving toolkit. It can be applied in a community to solve a 'real-life' water resource problem. In this instance there would be a two-stage application. The game would be played with the 'mock' resources and scenario and then the actual scenario and real life resources would be used to solve the community problem
- ❖ A conflict resolution toolkit for water users. It can be used to ease the way and facilitate negotiations between communities who are in conflict with one another over water resources

7. Appendix Two: Example of Knowledge Café Invitation



Interlogue 08 **Cape Town**



water: a scarce resource

*we need your voice to help position Africa as the thought leader
in taking water resource management to the next level;*

**please join us for this very special creative dialogue session, the second of four, aimed at
harvesting knowledge and innovation.*

date: Thursday may 15th, 2008

time:

place: 10:00 am until 2:00 pm

*the assembly, 61 Harrington street,
district six between Roeland & Darling
corner of Harrington and Constitution*

**rsvp to Valerie at awiruwat@gmail.com*

AWIRU⁸ operates within a paradigm of reflexive listening and creates a knowledge space in which socio-economic research expertise is created, nurtured and retained for the water sector. Through understanding the complexity of African water management, AWIRU is a contributor to the generation of water management solutions that are politically, socially, economically, environmentally and culturally sustainable in Africa.

⁸ The project was awarded in 2008 to the African Water Issues Research Unit (AWIRU) at the University of Pretoria and then moved to the University of the Western Cape in February 2009

Interlogue 08 – Knowledge Café Workshop Series

The purpose of this workshop series is to bring together experts and young professionals to create an opportunity to interrogate and inquire about important research and policy issues in the water sector. AWIRU believes that creating a space for ongoing dialogue around a wide range of issues will generate a climate of deliberate curiosity and research excellence amongst young professionals, informing the sector for the future. This series is rooted firmly within a spirit of learning and knowledge generation.

Interlogue 08 – Cape Town, was the second in the workshop series. One hundred and twenty participants, selected from sectors including water, health, social development and environment joined our Café for thought provoking discussions to interrogate key issues pertaining to the sector. We welcomed delegates from the Cape Flats, private sector, tertiary institutions as well as three high level delegates from the Ministry of Local Government, People's Republic of Bangladesh.

The KC recognizes the urgency of *interlogue*, across sectors, for solutions to Africa's water scarcity problems, creating a space for conversations between no more than 6 concerned participants at a time at each table. There were 22 tables set up in The Assembly. This venue was chosen to create a space that stimulates deliberate curiosity and thinking 'out of the box'. The delegates confirmed the urgent realization that human and environmental systems depend on good quality, clean water. Water is Life – it is a precious resource – our liquid gold and it was clear from the discussions that one of the most urgent concerns is to find ways to instill the 'value' of water amongst all its users.

The Interlogue Knowledge Cafés nurture the Café ambience - an informal and enjoyable environment - conducive to dialogue, in-depth discussions and knowledge exchanges amongst contributors. Interlogue 08, Cape Town explored ways to inspire creative thought and foster innovation and excitement to effect change and improvement.

It is our goal that the Interlogue Knowledge Cafes be action oriented and that there are practical solutions for policy, research and implementation. The following Knowledge Café will most likely be held in Durban and is planned around October 08.

The logo is a water crystal asterisks. The crystal represents the very essence of water. In this context the asterisks embodies the form of a water crystal. Together the asterisks and the crystal create a harmonic icon, capturing Interlogue - a dialogue on water. The icon is reinforced through the typeset on the Interlogue Invitations where the font choice mimics a text book and underscores the learning environment.