

**Understanding local participation in Water Climate
Adaptation programs:
Lessons from "Water as Leverage Cartagena"**

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Disclaimer:

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Cartatuya

¿Sabes que Cartagena es tuya?, que te quiere, que te arrulla, que te mece en su regazo, de playas y brisas, de sol y mar, de Caribe, de alegría, de fiesta y lucha, de resistencia y fortalezas, de abandonos y olvidos, de pobreza y miserias, de gente linda, de gente enferma, de gente con tanto potencial para regalarle belleza, para hacerla sostenible, para convertirla en una casa donde todos queremos estar y quedarnos, a la que todos hacemos más nuestra, más grande, más eterna.

Tómala, amala, hazla tuya. Vístela de las mejores galas, abraza cada una de sus heridas, piensa que es posible reparar los daños que tú y yo le hicimos, por acción, por omisión o indiferencia...No aguantes impávido más dolor, actúa.

Renómbrala, hazla Cartatuya, tu prioridad, tu elección, el producto de tus acciones diarias, deja de lado la quejadera, ¿Es que acaso no te das cuenta de que todos hacemos parte del problema? Y así mismo de la solución.

Cartatuya porque se nos agota el tiempo. No hay que ir más hondo, ni tocar otro fondo, ya ha sido suficiente. Nos hemos equivocado pero el amor es más fuerte. Cartatuya porque no es más ajena, piensa en tu Cartamía, piensa en la Cartanuestra, más allá de los lamentos y contriciones, es momento de movilizaciones.

Deja ya tu inercia, deja la indiferencia. Ya no desde tu ventana, sino desde el recorrido que te cansa, que te fastidia, tu razón de queja. Sí, cuando la vives, cuando la andas, cuando te pesa, solo quieres que te cargue, pero ¿Quién la carga a ella?

Quienes están en modo de subsistencia, no tienen otra cosa en que pensar. Para ellos, pensar en ciudad es una especie de lujo. Atacarlos en lugar de atenderlos, es por decir lo menos, injusto.

Sé entonces que me dirijo a una audiencia con ciertos privilegios, “educada”, con acceso a la prensa, a internet, a un computador, cosas que no tienen las mayorías de acá. A ese público entonces, además de preocupado, puedo pedirle que primero escriba su Cartamía, su autocrítica, y declaratoria de amor.

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List of Acronyms

CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CUG	Communal Governmental Unit
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
DWS	Dutch Water Sector
FRR	Flood Risk Reduction
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PFW	Partners for Water
RVO	The Netherlands Enterprise Agency
WAL	Water as Leverage
WALA	Water as Leverage Asia
WALC	Water as Leverage Cartagena
WG	Water Governance

Abstract

This study focuses on the limitations and opportunities presented by local participation to address power imbalances in the Water as Leverage Cartagena program as a case study of Climate Adaptation Programs. This research is necessary because it contributed to filling the academic gap in the study on the effect that the various layers of understanding and narratives of participation have on power dynamics present in Climate Adaptation Programs and its impact on how actors performed. The main research questions are focused on answering the limitations and opportunities of local participation to address power dynamics among the different stakeholders involved in Water as Leverage Cartagena, what are the diverse layers of understanding participation among different stakeholders and the impact of their participation, how participation manifests itself in early design phases of the program, and how do the governmental relations impact local government involvement.

The questions are addressed through a combination of methods, such as participatory action research, ethnography of policy translation and qualitative interviews. The main findings of the study were that grassroots NGOs are the ones mediating and generating connections between local actors and external actors; the understanding of participation was not homogenous from the beginning among actors, but two main common ideas arose: participation as a transformative and sensitive process, second, as a tool for reputation and power control. Likewise, it was seen that the Dutch Water Sector is trying to change the narrative of the Dutch expertise, for Dutch as knowledge facilitators, also, local actors' narrative was embedded in their livelihood conditions. Finally, the analysis demonstrated that WaL and RVO perceptions of personal leadership characteristics and local political and historical contexts from WaL partners shape the intensity of local government involvement in the WaL programs.

Relevance to Development Studies

There is a gap in how participation happens and integrates different knowledge, actions, and stakeholders in the early stages of climate adaptation programs and how power dynamics shape the development, engagement, and sustainability of that. This research aimed to contribute to the understanding of how local participation between The Netherlands and local actors from Cartagena, particularly those in vulnerable conditions, happens in a context of power imbalance. The research can provide more information on the limitations and opportunities of day-to-day participation in projects framed similarly. Additionally, since there is also a geographical gap in the analysis of the impact of power dynamics on the local participation in Climate Adaptation between Cartagena, Colombia, and The Netherlands, I aim to contribute to the knowledge available on how participation looks like and how it works through in this region of the world.

Keywords

Local Participation, Communication, Water Governance, Climate Adaptation Programs, Power Dynamics, Trust, Sensitivity, Livelihood conditions.

Chapter 1: Introduction

"... cities like people are not a single thing, they are multidimensional, diverse, impossible to trap in a single pair of adjectives, in a single idea."

Teresita Goyeneche.

1.1. Research problem: the role of participation to cope with power imbalances.

Growing urbanization, exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change, has significantly increased the frequency of humanitarian disasters worldwide, especially in flood-prone regions (Twig, J., 2004). Communities' susceptibility and exposure to flood-induced disasters have highlighted the urgent need for effective interventions. This surge of crises has been most pronounced in the "global south," leading to a substantial increase in CAP facilitated through North-South international cooperation initiatives. Sullivan and Stoler (2023), explain this phenomenon by attributing the increase in North-South collaboration on water management projects to the commodification of natural resources. This trend has been driven by the developmentalist paradigm accompanied by neoliberalism and capitalism, manifested through policy reforms like "structural adjustment".

Following the increase in North-South cooperation programs for climate change adaptation, privatization of water governance (WG) has escalated globally. This trend has led to a pronounced economic dependence of Southern countries on private and public entities from the global North to implement such programs (Urueña, 2012:285). In Colombia, the decentralization process has been instrumental in facilitating the arrival of these North-South cooperation programs. This phenomenon can be attributed to efforts to redistribute authority to territorial entities, as stressed by Urueña (2012). However, this decentralization has presented challenges, particularly in cities like Cartagena, where responsibilities were transferred without the corresponding institutional and financial resources, exacerbating the complexities associated with implementing climate adaptation programs (CAP) with the city's public resources (Urueña, 2012).

The addition of WG to the global agenda can be attributed to the widespread effects of climate change, which include issues like water scarcity, flooding and supply issues currently affecting countries worldwide. CAP has emerged as a long-term response to climate challenges. Global north countries, which have historically contributed significantly to the climate crisis acceleration, are currently leading adaptation cooperation projects. Based on what they call expertise economic and technological resources, some countries, like The Netherlands, have extended their initiatives to the global south, as Urueña (2012) points out.

The Dutch are known worldwide for planning their urban development around water. The Dutch polder model that occupies water to turn it into habitable land has been used to promote the idea of the Dutch as water experts). The Dutch Water Sector (DWS) has been adapting its model to different countries as an infrastructure solution for CAP (Richter, 2020b). The DWS and its involvement in international cooperation projects, such as WALC, are reviewed in more detail in section 4.1. as the case study selected. The proliferation of cooperation programs for CAP was accompanied by another trend that emerged in the development sector. From the 1960s to the 1990s, local participation of citizens, particularly in vulnerable communities, was incorporated into the global agenda as a norm of development programs and good practice (Wehn et al., 2015). Participation has been used as a regulatory social and environmental justice tool in the face of the power imbalances that this type of cooperation dynamics represents, as a source of social transformation reached

by horizontal participation (Urueña, 2012:285), integrating vulnerable communities, indigenous peoples, civil society, and local authorities. However, there are several challenges and questions regarding the role of local participation in addressing the power imbalances that international cooperation can present.

During cooperation programs, hierarchical power relations arise, where stakeholders with more significant resources (economic, political, and intellectual, among others) establish the game rules, increasing the exclusion of specific populations (Lukes, 1974). Power dynamics represent a problem for achieving horizontal conversations, raising the question of whether they are possible. Thus, within academy, a question persists about the true scope of participation and the reasons that explain why even when projects are framed as participatory, they are still not contextualized, present little local ownership and solutions connected to livelihoods, and where development and adaptation are seen as a vast infrastructure investment (Richter, 2020b).

Nevertheless, the use of participatory methods in the humanitarian and developmental sectors is still seen as a tool to deal with those power dynamics by reaching social transformation and inclusion through the redistribution of power (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015) and increasing the opportunity for vulnerable populations to co-design and co-own the programs. Moreover, local participation creates contextualized programs that include different knowledge systems in defining the designing process, making them sustainable and implementable (Gaillard et al., 2016b; Melis and Apthorpe, 2020). The premise of including local participation in development programs, like CAP, is to increase decision-making legitimacy, justice, and governability (Arnstein, 1969). However, other academics question whether participation can enhance the effectiveness and fairness of decision-making, arguing that participation is paradoxical (Cleaver, 1999). Questions have been raised about the role of participation regarding power dynamics because even if some projects claim to be participatory, some fail to sustainably engage communities in the programs (Cleaver, 1999).

However, understanding and application of participation varies between actors. Although vulnerable communities participating in programs is seen as a successful process, it does not directly translate into legitimate and horizontal processes from the local perspective (Arnstein, 1969). Consequently, integrating horizontal conversations in CAP with diverse actors from different government levels (local, national, international) and sectors (civil society, academia, NGOs, Private Sector, Local Government, International Government, Donors, Development Banks, among others) presents several challenges. There is no clear idea on how participation looks like on the ground, how is understood by different stakeholders, what is the impact of the understanding in the perform of participation, and what are its limitations and opportunities to foster horizontal governance in designing CAP.

1.2. Research question and objective

Through this study, I investigated the challenges and opportunities that local participation presents as a tool to mitigate power imbalances at the ground level, during CAP design. To do this, I used the Water as Leverage Cartagena (WALC) program between the municipality of Cartagena, Colombia and WaL and RVO on behalf of the Dutch Government, as a case study to understand how it is conceptualized and practiced and its effectiveness in addressing power imbalances. From the research, I derived and analyzed participatory strategies that can improve the sustainability of CAP while recognizing the limitations of participatory methods in practice (Cleaver, 1999).

1.3. Research question(s)

The main question: What are the limitations and opportunities of local participation to address power dynamics among the different stakeholders involved in Water as Leverage Cartagena?

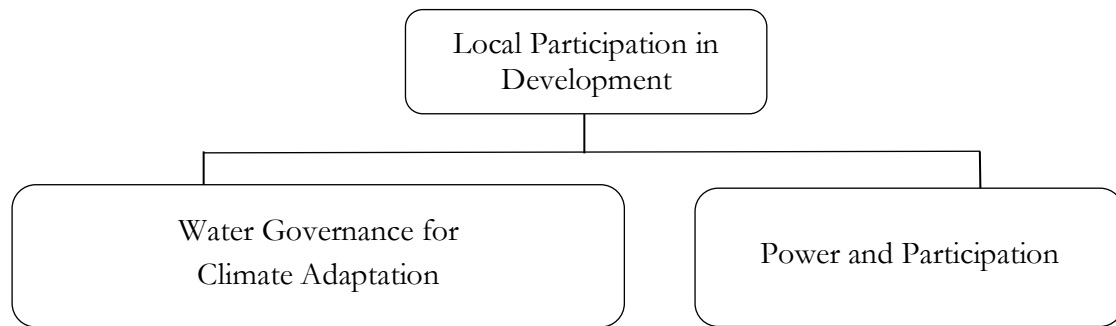
The sub-questions:

- What are the diverse layers of understanding participation among the different stakeholders involved in the WaL Cartagena and how does it impact how they participate?
- How does local participation manifest itself in the early design phase of WaL Cartagena in the context of power imbalances?
- What are the enabling and limiting factors for participation of local stakeholders in WaL Cartagena?
- How does the roles of Cartagena's and The Netherlands' government in WaL Cartagena influence participation of local stakeholders, in particular Ciénaga de la Virgen community?

Chapter 2: Studying participation and its role.

In this chapter, I examined local participation in the framework of CAP based on three fundamental concepts presented in the figure 2. First, I reviewed frameworks, and typologies of participation in the context of development, examining its social, environmental, and cultural dimensions. Second, I incorporated theories and conceptualizations about WG, specifically in the context of CAP. Third, I comprehensively analyzed the interconnection between power dynamics and participation. Through this approach, I sought to provide a holistic understanding of local participation's role in designing CAP.

Figure 1. Theoretical framework



2.1. Local participation in development.

In recent decades, the word participation or participatory processes became a buzzword in humanitarian and development sectors, being a mechanism used to generate "social transformation and empowerment" of vulnerable and marginalized populations by including them in politics decision-making, academia, private sector, guaranteeing inclusion, legitimacy, and justice (Arnstein, 1969; Oakley, 1991; White, 1996; Cleaver, 1999; Fung, 2006). However, some authors question whether participation exists and generates collective benefits reflected in legitimate, fair, and efficient governance (Fung, 2006) or whether it is a myth and simply a requirement.

One reference model on participation is described by Arnstein, which conceptualizes participation as "citizen power" for redistribution of power (1969:216), through an authentic deliberative process. Arnstein placed at the center of the discussion questions about who benefits from participation, dividing society into "powerholders" who allow the "powerless" to participate with mechanisms ranging from "non-participation, degrees of tokenism, to degrees of citizen participation (Ibid., 216). White (1996), who understood participation as "a political process and action," changes the categories of "powerholders" and "powerless" to "Top-Down" and "Bottom-Up" interests, recognizing the heterogeneity of actors at different levels, with diverse interests and expectations about who, how and for what purpose participatory processes are carried out. White (1996) developed the framework of politics of participation, dividing participation into: nominal, instrumental, representative, and transformative.

Power dynamics and interests define the forms and functions of participation; participation is also the tool that allows challenging the dominant powers through the

negotiation of these interests and to reach a middle ground, turning participation into a means and an end (White, 1996). Cleaver (1999) conducted an analysis of the paradoxes of participation, that resulted in a questioning of their effectiveness and added two fundamental limitations to the conceptualization of ideal participation for Cartagena's scenario: I. technical limitations like time, and capital that affect trust generation and understanding capacity. II. Complexity to define who is the target "community", since they are not a homogenous entity (Cleaver, 1999:99). These two limitations are essential to analyze who is the local in Cartagena in the eyes of a program designed in the Netherlands.

Alternately Fung (2006) proposed the "Democracy Cube" theory to critique Arstein's typology, arguing that participation goes beyond binarism between the powerful and the powerless. It offers a holistic analysis that involves many possible actors and scenarios where communication and authority are fundamental (Fung, 2006:67). According to Fung (2006), participation can be seen through a spectrum of three dimensions: I. Who participates? And how do they become part of the discussion? II. Modes of communication, which vary in intensity, and finally, III. The level of authority and power influences the final decision.

Fung's theory is fundamental for analyzing local participation from a perspective without a particular recipe for a perfect participatory process, always requiring a contextual analysis. Fung (2006) argues that from the communicative dimension, a legitimate and fair participatory process can fluctuate between mechanisms that allow participants to develop preferences, have space to express them, exercise consultation or advice, and recognize the cost of participation for locals. Participation costs are essential for analyzing Cartagena's context when defining who participates and understanding "structural incentives" (Fung, 2006:67).

Local participation in this research is conceptualized as a naturally conflictual collective decision-making process and mechanisms oriented to social transformation and power redistribution (White, 1996), defined by power dynamics, interests, and motivations of a multiplicity of actors. This conceptualization includes the analysis of the paradoxes and limitations of participatory processes (Cleaver, 1999) in terms of resources and the complexity of the definition of who is "the local" or "the community" to be empowered when studying "who participates, the intensity of that participation and the power influence" (Fung, 2006:66).

2.2. Water Governance for Climate Adaptation Programs.

The dynamics of local participation were be studied in the framework of CAP for FRR and resilience. It is essential to conceptualize WG and CAP in contexts of international cooperation to analyze these dynamics within the WALC program between Cartagena and The Netherlands. There are multiple discussions around its definition; however, they agree that it is an "institutional process and the rules for the game for authority and decision-making" (Grindle, 2007:555). Therefore, governance relates to decision-making regarding allocating and regulating economic, social, cultural, and natural resources (Partnership, Rogers, and Hall, 2002).

I focused on the governance of natural resources, particularly Water. Narrative around WG gained attention during the 1990s because of increased disasters and natural hazards due to climate change, which led to the International Conference on Water and the Environment (ICWE). The ICWE was created to address problems of scarcity and misuse of water resources through alternative WG (WG) (Partnership, Rogers, and Hall, 2002). WG has been seen to manage and allocate water resources and as a mechanism to reduce climate change and water-related disaster impacts. There are several WG challenges related to climate

change. The research focused on the flood disaster, the central crisis Cartagena is facing, and the objective of Water as a Lever of Cartagena. For this conceptualization, disasters are extreme events with enormous impacts on societies (Khan, Vasilescu, and Khan, 2008:43). They disrupt their functioning due to human, material, economic, environmental (UNDRR, 2007) and cultural damages and losses.

With the rise of collaborative WG in the 1990s, international cooperation partnerships for implementing DRR and climate resilience policies and strategies were also strengthened (Khan, Vasilescu, and Khan, 2008:43). DRR explains disasters as the sum of “hazards (vulnerability, and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce the potential chances of risk” (Khan, Vasilescu, and Khan, 2008:44). Adaptation to climate change is one of the many processes that are part of DRR (Kelman, Gaillard and Mercer, 2015). In Cartagena’s case, flooding occurs due to the sum of the city’s environmental hazards, population’s social and spatial vulnerability, infrastructure insufficiency, government’s poor institutional capacity, and poor cooperation between different local actors for the implementation of climate resilience and adaptation programs.

Scholars and organizations (Grindle, 2007; Hydén, Court and Mease, 2005) agree that some characteristics of good governance relate to participatory, transparent, accountable, transformational, and inclusive decision-making processes that involve formal and informal norms and all actors, for just and legitimate democracy. In terms of efficiency and sustainability, participatory processes for the design of CAP generate better benefits since they require local and contextual information on spatial knowledge, the causes of vulnerability and hazards (McCall and Peters-Guarin, 2012). According to McCall and Peters-Guarin (2012), in terms of effectiveness and sustainability, CAP requires local knowledge about social and place vulnerability factors, potential hotspots, copy mechanisms, culture, natural hazards, local norms, current and past related projects, and local networks, which requires participatory processes that involve locals with such knowledge.

In Cartagena’s case, this translates into designs focused on mitigating the impact of hazards. It contemplates reducing vulnerability and strengthening local capacities. It delves in understanding of local context to achieve consensus on city’s needed solutions, which requires time, trust, and involvement of the most vulnerable communities during the process (McCall and Peters-Guarin, 2012). What are the fundamental development challenges Cartagena faces? Are there environmental, social, or economic challenges that generate flooding? (Leichenko and O’Brien, 2008). These questions are crucial for designing solutions, as WALC intended. Disasters, like floods in Cartagena, are directly related to climate change; however, other threats caused by human decisions have a more significant impact on their occurrence, like misuse of water bodies, invasions, lack of clear land use plans, excessive tourism, lack of adequate infrastructure, private sector pollution, poverty, and few local cooperation projects for development.

Finally, the conceptualization of WG concerning the implementation of climate change adaptation and WRF programs is understood in this document as the grassroots co-governance consensus arising from implementing institutional processes, rules, and participation mechanisms. WG seeks the integration of local and international actors in the decision-making process of the various stages of this type of program’s design, emphasizing the inclusion of vulnerable people and those at risk of flooding (Grindle, 2007:555). According to McCall and Peters-Guarin (2012:735) participation in the co-governance CAP like WALC is essential as it provides ground truth for climate models and explains the actual impacts and adaptation strategies of local people.

2.3. Power and participation

Knowledge and power are closely linked to participation, and participatory action research (PAR) processes were developed to challenge power structures by recognizing other forms of knowledge and including them in decision-making, particularly that of vulnerable, oppressed, and marginalized people. Lukes (1974) is recognized in conceptualizing power and its relation to knowledge and participation. From the analysis of Gaventa and Cornwall (2015:466), Lukes' first dimension conceptualizes power as the use and production of knowledge as a resource to generate public debates, which promotes discussions among "experts" that are "objective, rational and highly credible" to make political decisions.

Consequently, being an expert in the predominant, scientific, or Eurocentric knowledge is considered a requirement to be part of political decision-making, which creates a dichotomy between valid knowledge and less valid or invalid knowledge, excluding certain social groups from the public debate (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015:466). Processes of exclusion from public debate are those that make it difficult for citizens, particularly vulnerable communities, to participate in technical conversations to make decisions that may affect their interests and needs, which translates into their absence and non-participation in the public debate; however, this is observed by people in positions of power, authority, and influence as an awareness gap problem or as Gaventa and Cornwall (2015:466) argued "is interpreted as their apathy or inefficacy, rather than as a process of exclusion from the political process."

The second dimension of Lukes stated that those in power determine how expertise is created, and who participates in the construction of that knowledge (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015). In the case of CAP, DWS is determining what water expertise is, and its programs travel to countries like Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Colombia. Nevertheless, participation in the design of the roadmap of programs such as WALC requires an openness to new knowledge, voices, and perspectives in the deliberation to make it fairer and more democratic (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015:466), avoiding bias in the understanding of problems, needs, and solutions required by the city. The third dimension of Lukes is analyzed as controlling people's consciousness to reduce the possibility of conflicts due to conflicting opinions among citizens, particularly vulnerable populations (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015:466).

The control of the production and access to knowledge can derive from a silence translated into citizen non-participation. Power is exercised through the narratives used in social media, educational institutions, and poor access to information, generating a hegemony of knowledge on specific issues and affecting vulnerable communities with difficulties accessing other sources of knowledge. Participation in the WALC process, the involvement of a diverse local population (private sector, NGOs, vulnerable populations) can challenge prevailing knowledge power structures (local "experts" but mainly from the Netherlands). However, it is necessary to implement strategies that generate greater critical awareness in vulnerable communities to mobilize and actively participate in the program.

According to Gaventa and Cornwall (2015), multiple authors agree that this framework is limited in understanding power because its antagonistic position between the powerful and powerless. Consequently, the understanding of power requires including visions beyond the power of one actor over another, recognizing that all individuals have power in some form and together, they can unite their agency to fight for the same goal. This broader conception of power is used to achievement social transformation and change (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015:70). "According to this perspective, power is seen as growing from within oneself, not something limited by others, shaped by one's identity and self-conception of agency, as well as by 'the Other'" (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015:467).

Foucault (1979, cited in Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015) understanding of power was also analyzed by Gaventa's, who established that "Power is inherent in all social relations", triggering a "multiplicity of forces". According to Gaventa's (2003) analysis of Foucault's theorization, power is not only harmful, but can also be positive but requires its distribution to achieve involvement of different actors in the production and distribution of knowledge, which is achieved through communication, redistribution, appropriation, and exchange of knowledge. This called "knowledge translation" requires establishing a common language that involves this diversity in a way that is accessible and usable for all. The level of political participation (intensity of communication, authority, and influence) is determined by the dynamics and power structures that define the knowledge or expertise needed to be part of the deliberative process.

Power can be understood as an irregularly distributed force in society based on narratives that reinforce certain types of knowledge or, on the contrary, challenge and resist them. Hence, it generates dynamics of constant conflict between people who exercise their agency (power) within a structure that at the same time allows and limits, which is controlled by those who define the norms, being a "duality of structure" (Giddens, 1984). Giddens (1984) offers a dual vision of power, where it can be understood as the transforming power of individuals to generate social and structural changes, or as the power to control and dominate through the rules and roles within social structures because they are not equally distributed.

Finally, to analyze the effect of power dynamics on local participation in the design of CAP, the concept of power in this paper is understood as a force exercised through multiple forms and functions that arise from narratives or discourses that perpetuate or challenge hegemonic powers. Thus, power and participation are understood and defined by social class and other categories such as gender, race, and religion (Gaventa, 2003:5). In this sense, pluralist participation is a counter-hegemonic tool of resistance and a positive way of exercising power.

Chapter 3: Research methods and participants

In this chapter, I explain the research process in detail. I provide the arguments for case and participant selection and explain the thematic analysis conducted. Finally, my positionality and my research's ethical and risk implications.

3.1. Research process

I collected primary data through qualitative semi-structured interviews; some components of PAR methodology with participatory observations, workshops, transect walk and transect canoe. Additionally, I included ethnography of policy translation as multi-sited fieldwork (Marcus,1995) since the case study, is an ongoing process between Colombia and The Netherlands. During the ethnography, according to the type of activity, I was involved as an observant or observant participant. Besides, I included secondary data from RVO and WaL websites and academic papers focused on WaL Asia programs. I implemented the methods separately or combined depending on factors like the type of participant, the place, and the context.

Regarding local design workshops organized by WaL, that gathered all type of participants, I combined ethnography with participatory observation; during these events, I used field notes to collect the data. During the visits to La Ciénaga, I combined ethnography with PAR through the walks, canoe trip and the timeline; these methods were implemented based on their socioeconomic conditions and motivations to participate in the research. With the Ciénaga participants, I shared about nine hours in their territory, but conversations were not recorded. Interactions with these actors were in Spanish, the informed consent was read out loud by me, and the authorization to participate was given verbally. I used field notes and memos in which they wrote their opinions during the timeline for the analysis.

I implemented semi-structured interviews with participants from RVO, WaL, consortium, NGO, EPA, and private sector, whom I met individually. These actors offered the opportunity to have personalized interviews, in person or virtually, because their socioeconomic conditions allowed them to mobilize or connect online. The informed consent to participate and allow voice recording was signed up physically or displayed on screen during online interviews. Two of the interviews were done in English. Finally, after fieldwork, I translated the interview transcriptions into English through the software Trint and double-checked them manually.

3.2. Fieldwork in Colombia and The Netherlands

I conducted fieldwork in Colombia (Cartagena and Bogotá) and The Netherlands (Utrecht and The Hague) from July to September 2023. The fieldwork was carried out in three phases and included 16 participants. The first one occurred in July 2023, in Colombia in two days of participatory observation within the local design workshops of WALC. Additionally, I facilitated one participatory workshop in Olaya Herrera neighbourhood, next to La Ciénaga, where participants created a timeline of Hurricane IOTA's impact. Participants took me into a canoe tour in the wetland to show me how they relate with water. Finally, I conducted six semi-structured interviews with various program stakeholders in this first fieldwork.

The second phase occurred in the Netherlands, from August to September 2023 I conducted two semi-structured interviews with participants from RVO and WaL. I also participated in the "Social Inclusion in the Water Sector" event organized by PFW. I reviewed

secondary data like academic articles and social media related WaL Asia and WALC. I analysed the data using Atlas ti software, Version 23.1.1 in a thematic and deductive manner. The third and final phase took place in September of 2023 in Colombia. I participated in the local design workshop and a forum of the first phase of WALC. Additionally, I observed the business roundtable in Bogotá. After submission, I will share the results with research participants and develop a collaborative podcast episode that narrates the lessons learned from the research, highlighting life experiences related to floods, participation in decision-making, and power dynamics from the perspective of local actors.

3.4. Case selection

The selection of WALC as the case study for this research paper was influenced by my unique position as a Cartagena native living in the Netherlands, which grants me unparalleled access to the critical actors involved in this initiative across both countries. This access is instrumental in providing comprehensive insights into participation complexities and real-time power dynamics. In addressing knowledge gaps, it is essential to note that while WaL methodology has been previously implemented in Asia, this marks the inaugural introduction of the program to America.

An analysis of this case can potentially deliver valuable lessons and knowledge regarding participation, power dynamics, and WG for countries that share similar characteristics and encounter similar international cooperation projects. Additionally, this research can serve as a foundational starting point for analyzing future WaL projects in Latin America, aligning with the program's aspirations for scalability. Lastly, it is crucial to consider my positionality and intersectionality. As a student and researcher at an international university, I recognize the privilege and responsibility that come with this. It drives me to shed light on the outcomes of WaL in my home city, contribute to a deeper understanding of the local context, and advocate for those who may otherwise remain unheard in the Netherlands. This attempt aims not only to enhance CAP but also to advocate for the cause of social justice.

3.4. Participant selection

The selection of participants was guided by their respective sectors and roles within the WALC program. The aim was to enclose a wide range of actors involved in the local participatory workshops in Cartagena, considering their diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, intersectionalities, livelihood experiences, and nationalities. The diversity of participants was instrumental in gaining a comprehensive understanding of how individuals, both local and external, engaged in the same process and perceived the role of participation within the context of existing power dynamics. Table 1 provides information, including country of origin, type of participation, and sectors they represent.

The research comprised 16 participants: fourteen Colombians and two Dutch. Among Colombian participants, eight identified themselves as community leaders from the Olaya Herrera neighbourhood in Cartagena, representing different sectors i.e., Playa Blanca, Zarabanda, El Progreso, La Puntilla, and Magdalena. These areas fall under the WaL Hotspot La Ciénaga. I established a connection with them through the Director of Fundación Grupo Social. Two Dutch Government officials from RVO and WaL, and one consortium member were also participating.

It is essential to acknowledge a limitation in the participant selection process. Due to time constraints during the fieldwork, not all actors affiliated with the project from the consortia could be included. The analysis may not provide an in-depth understanding of the Dutch actors' roles within the program.

Table 1. Research participants

Participants	Country of Origin	Method	Sector
1	Colombia	Participatory Workshops	Citizens from hotspot Ciénaga de la Virgen
2	Colombia		Citizens from hotspot Ciénaga de la Virgen
3	Colombia		Citizens from hotspot Ciénaga de la Virgen
4	Colombia		Citizens from hotspot Ciénaga de la Virgen
5	Colombia		Citizens from hotspot Ciénaga de la Virgen
6	Colombia		Citizens from hotspot Ciénaga de la Virgen
7	Colombia		Citizens from hotspot Ciénaga de la Virgen
8	Colombia		Citizens from hotspot Ciénaga de la Virgen
9	Colombia	Interviews	Local Government - Cartagena
10	Colombia		Local NGO - Cartagena
11	Colombia		Local Environmental Authority Cartagena
12	Colombia		Local Private Sector Cartagena
13	Colombia		Local Private Sector Cartagena
14	The Netherlands		RVO - Dutch Government
15	Colombia		WaL - Consortium "ConAgua"
16	The Netherlands		WaL / RVO - Dutch Government

3.5. Thematic Analysis:

Data analysis was conducted thematically by thoroughly reviewing interview transcriptions, observations, and field notes. The main objective was to identify keywords and discern trends in the data collected. This thematic reading was based on the theoretical framework, explicitly concerning critical concepts associated with participation, power dynamics and WG. Specific codes such as "codetection", "trust as participation", "narratives of local participation", and "homogeneity in participation" emerged throughout.

To understand participation, the analysis delved into concepts, theories and frameworks developed by previous scholarly efforts (Arnstein, 1969; Oakley, 1991; White, 1996; Cleaver, 1999; Hydén, Court and Mease, 2005; Fung, 2006; Grindle, 2007; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015 among others). From them I engaged with notions like top-down, bottom-up, trust, legitimacy, livelihoods, justice, hierarchy, authority, and influencing-power. The examination of narratives focused on concepts related to power and governance, like expertise, knowledge, identity, credible knowledge, awareness gap, ownership, and co-creation.

Coding on forms of participation links to theoretical concepts of participation, namely: power, livelihood strategies, type of participation, communication, inclusion, exclusion, and influence. Similarly, coding on broader power dynamics between governments terms like bilateral, unilateral, politicization, effectiveness, and constraint arose. To facilitate this analysis, I used the Atlas ti to develop a deductive approach via axial coding. It should be noted that all interactions in Colombia were initially conducted and analyzed in Spanish. Subsequently, translations were made into English to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the conversations with research participants.

3.6. Positionality

As a young, single Caribbean woman of colour, my perspective regarding participation and power relations is marked by experiences with social, economic, and environmental inequalities, in which water has had a dual meaning. It has been both a source of fear and

risk due to flood disasters, and at the same time, I have seen it as a symbol of life and joy, loaded with symbolism from my home. Now, I find myself as a Latina migrant, Colombian, studying in the Netherlands, which gives me a position of insider and outsider in both territories. I am disillusioned by the marginalization of vulnerable communities by local governments, which have been labelled as "illegal" and, worse, punished without receiving public services in the most impoverished areas of the city, like La Ciénaga. I was intrigued to study the role of participation in challenging power dynamics and injustice in an international cooperation program like WaL.

I asked myself if participation of all local actors would reduce or increase the exclusion of marginalized communities, or if their presence in participatory spaces would question power relations and foster transformation. I recognize my position and the influence I may have on this research. Academically, my positionality comes from a post-structural and constructivist paradigm rooted in my education and life experiences. My experiences as Cartagena influence my assumptions about the object of study, the participants, and the research context.

To prevent based on my perception, intersectionalities and interest interfering the research process, I established checks and balances by increasing the scope of actors involved as research participants. I paid attention to my way of interacting with research participants from all sectors, with respect, open-mindedness, and genuine curiosity during our interactions. From my work background, I came from the private sector, where I worked for six years with more than a thousand co-workers from Cartagena and more than 1,000 people from impoverished communities in the city. This experience led me to develop valuable tools to foster trust and meaningful conversations and highlight the different realities in the same city. I used these tools in the field, but it represented a massive challenge for me in ethical terms due to the extreme socioeconomic conditions of the research participants. I aimed to connect with them through sensitivity, active listening and trust while avoiding any discomfort or potential risk for them and me.

3.7. Risk and Ethical consideration

In preparation for this research, I participated in a Safety and Security course facilitated by CERES. I learned about risk assessment (hazards, likelihood, impact, mitigation, and contingency plans), ethics and care of research participants, and mental health preparedness along the lines developed by Fuji (2012). Thus, ethics were transversal to reduce the risks for me and participants, which required going beyond informed consent. Concerning the "Dilemmas of power," it was essential to recognize that there is an asymmetry of power and relationships as a local researcher but coming from an international university, which can generate a perception of an outsider or WaL staff member in the community. In this case, an ethical consideration to avoid this risk was being transparent, trustworthy, and consistent with my narratives in the community, which has a particular context of being a vulnerable and marginalized community.

I was clear with all participants about the nature of my research, and what it means to me personally. Additionally, I took distance from Dutch actors to avoid biases from my perception of their participation in the program and as a form to demonstrate transparency about benefits for them and me. Regarding proximity dilemmas, I paid attention to participant's privacy and the privilege and responsibility that doing research brings with it (Fuji, 2012). I was careful to take into consideration socioeconomic conditions of all actors to define the methods implemented to make them feel comfortable. In terms of the publication dilemma, I remained faithful when translating the information from Spanish to English. I paid attention to emotions; the different voices, stories, and understandings to

keep their power in written English intact. I present more reflexions of the ethical aspects of this research in Appendix 1.

Chapter 4: The case of Cartagena and Water as Leverage

In this chapter, I explored Cartagena de Indias' background. Understanding the city's context is essential to get crucial insights into local dynamics and their relevance to the research topic. Additionally, I offered a comprehensive overview that details DWS's connection with the significant trends in development privatization. I also illustrated the importance of WALC in the context of this study.

4.1. Cartagena, La ciudad Heroica.



Figure 3

Modified image of La Ciénaga de la Virgen and its communities, source: Mayor's Office of Cartagena de Indias.

degradation, and sea level rise (Montaño, 2020). These factors, combined with existing vulnerabilities, have pushed many of the most disadvantaged residents to live in informal settlements in low-lying areas. Consequently, the city faces an unequal distribution of flood risk, which affects health, education, mobility, well-being, and food security, among other aspects. The city's CAP works in disconnection between national and local WG policies (Sullivan and Stoler, 2023). Cartagena's government lacks resources to address structural issues, which legitimizes the privatization of the city's development, including the privatization of public services however, its implementation faces challenges (Sullivan and Stoler, 2023). The narrative of international cooperation and private financing for CAP has intensified in the city.

These programs have focused on infrastructure development, like restoration of water bodies, storm sewers, coastal protection, and ecological restoration, neglecting the root causes of social and spatial inequality and sustainable livelihoods (Richter, 2020b). This

Cartagena, a city surrounded by several bodies of water, including the bay, internal canals, wetlands, and the coast, is a tourist and port centre. However, it is also known for its marked inequality since more than 45% of its population lives in conditions of poverty and vulnerability and is also known for having more than 12 majors in 10 years (González, 2022a). This inequality is driven by weak governance, an informal economy, forced internal displacement, and an influx of migrants from Venezuela (Pérez et al., 2007).

The city has been known for its resilience and heroism. Cartagenos continue living amid a chaotic, beautiful, hostile city (Espinosa et al., 2017). In recent years, the city has been confronted by constant floods that are increasing the pre-existent vulnerability of communities (Espinosa et al., 2017:9).

Some of the threats the city and its citizens face include increased rainfall, coastal erosion, environmental

oversight increases vulnerability among local communities, particularly those in informal settlements (Plan 4C, 2017). Finally, this local narrative reinforces the idea that informal settlements around La Ciénaga, a central wetland, are environmental threats to the city rather than recognizing the socioeconomic factors that drove their settlement decisions (Turner, 2017). After Hurricane IOTA in 2020, the humanitarian crisis in Cartagena intensified, driving the search for new CAP with international support (Montaño, 2020). Vulnerable communities around Ciénaga de La Virgen continually experience flooding without receiving essential services or development interventions.

4.2. Water as Leverage and Dutch Water Sector

The Netherlands is famous for its water management expertise, from which different international cooperation programs have resulted. The narrative of their expertise started spreading worldwide through the "Polder model" (Richter, 2020b), where hard and soft infrastructure was promoted as a long-term solution to address DRR, climate change adaptation and food security. One of the most recent programs created by the Dutch Government through RVO was WaL Asia (Water as a Lever for Resilient Cities, n.d.). In this research, I focus on the new version WaL Cartagena o Construyendo con el Agua.

WaL, like other RVO programs, aims to create long-term water adaptation solutions to climate change in countries of the Global South through international cooperation, different because it is framed in a more participatory and socially inclusive way. The program's approach promises comprehensive, sustainable, inclusive, financially viable, scalable, and implementable solutions. According to WaL and RVO, it is a process that depends on collaborative partnerships to incorporate diverse knowledge and perspectives in the design of local solutions (Water as a Leverage for Resilient Cities, n.d.). The program consists of three phases: research, analysis, and design, preliminary design and structuring of project proposal, and the full implementation of climate-resilient water infrastructure projects.

Finally, I focused on the first phase, which involves local design workshops, local forums, and a financial roundtable (Water as a Lever for Resilient Cities, n.d.). According to the Dutch PFW (Partners voor Water, 2023), lessons from WaL Semarang were implemented, which were related to the lack of active participation of local NGOs in the resilience process, the absence of local institutionalization of resilience design approaches, and difficulties for financialization and implementation of solutions presented (Laeni et al., 2020). I explained how power dynamics are embedded in international cooperation programs for WG between Colombia and The Netherlands and its impact on participation performance. Moreover, I discussed the motivations, needs, and logic behind each actor and how private development structures create losers and winners.

Chapter 5: findings and analysis

In this chapter, I introduce and analyze the findings, divided into five subsections. The first overviews the actors participating in WaL and their roles. The second one discusses the different layers of understanding of the role of participation for actors involved in WALC. Third section delves into the second finding, which concerns the narratives behind the understanding and how those narratives operate. The fourth subsection presents how the understanding and narratives of participation are manifested in practice by describing their forms, strategies, and aims, among other characteristics. Finally, in the fifth section, I explore how the micro and meso dynamics observed in WALC are intertwined with macro power dynamics.

5.1. WaL Cartagena Actors, their interaction, NGO's role as intermediary.

The first finding is related to the actors involved in WALC regarding their connections, positions, perceptions, and power dynamics. In this section, I described the actors (locals and external), then, their connections in the map according to WaL structure, interviews, and observations. Lastly, I analyzed how people at risk of floods perceive the program structure and how those dynamics affect power relations and decision-making processes in this program. WALC involves diverse actors with varying degrees of power, often simplified as local and non-local, but these distinctions are fluid and central to my analysis. The table 2 shows each actor's status, whether local or external, based on specific characteristics mentioned by research participants, and their motivation to participate in WALC.

Community members from La Ciénaga, NGO, private sector representatives, and EPA were categorized as locals, while Cartagena's government had broker status between local and external actors. Then, external actors were divided into intermediaries, like the consortiums ConAgua and Raíces. Finally, the Dutch public-private actors are affiliated with the Dutch Government, such as the Dutch Embassy in Colombia, WaL staff, RVO, and Invest International. In reviewing the literature on the role of participation, authors e.g., Arnstein, Fals-Borda, and White have described it as a process capable of generating social transformation and whose ideal vision is centred on horizontal and inclusive conversations.

However, the dynamics among WALC actors in terms of connections, involvement in events, and power to influence decisions, presented a hierarchical relationship defined by economic, technological, and knowledge resources. Figure 3 locates the actors on a map from The Netherlands to Cartagena and shows the existing relationship between the actors mentioned in Table 2, in which two clusters of actors are found based on the interviews and observations. At the beginning of Figure 3 is the cluster of powerful Dutch actors participating in the Aid and Trade policies intending to create programs e.g., WaL.

At the lower part of Figure 3 is the cluster of local stakeholders, identified as WaL's target audience during the interviews. In the middle of Figure 3 are the consortiums ConAgua and Raíces, who were presented by WaL as intermediaries or design teams, in charge of bridging the gap between both clusters with the support of the Dutch embassy in Colombia and Cartagena's mayor's office representing the local actor's cluster. Participants from WaL, consortium, and Cartagena's Mayor's Office mentioned that the consortiums have the responsibility of participatory methodologies and integration of local actors. However, when talking with participants from La Ciénaga about WaL's structure, their perception of the mapping of actors and the position of intermediaries was seen differently.

The intermediary role, from their perception, is being occupied by the local NGO working in that territory, which paid for their transportation to attend events in areas far from the community, informed them about the program, and has been keeping them active and accompanied during WaL events. The NGO is seen as trustworthy since it has been implementing programs of CAP in La Ciénaga and training the community, as one research participant of its inhabitants said, “After the hurricane, Fundación Grupo Social trained us on risk management and how to make risk maps.” The role of the NGO was mentioned during the workshop in La Ciénaga, as a key element to provide solutions that have positive impacts in their livelihoods.

"If this project wants legitimacy, they should use the legitimate grassroots organizations that already exist and work in the territory and do the activities hand in hand with them, invite them to participate in the process, do it in the areas where there will be impact." Participant from La Ciénaga.

The presence of the NGO working in Zone 6 of La Ciénaga in WaL was so strong, that at the beginning of the fieldwork, I thought it was part of one of the consortia because its director integrated panel discussions, appeared in WALC videos and was very involved. However, when talking with her, I was surprised to know she was not part of WaL. The motivation was focused on attracting some of the program's solutions to the NGO's area of influence, benefiting the NGO and the community. Figure 4 presents the map of actors from La Ciénaga participants' point of view, where the local NGO is between the middle and the top of the figure, since it is seen as the intermediary and representative between them and the Dutch cluster. Also, it shows the NGO's capacity to connect community from La Ciénaga with RVO and WaL staff.

“Our role has been as facilitators and articulators, in terms of the conversations that are taking place with the community, we want to put the focus on them, for the relevant actors to set their sights on the commune... we also offer information about the community, and we make it available to actors like the Municipality and WaL, so that they can approach the community in a more informed way.” Participant from NGO.

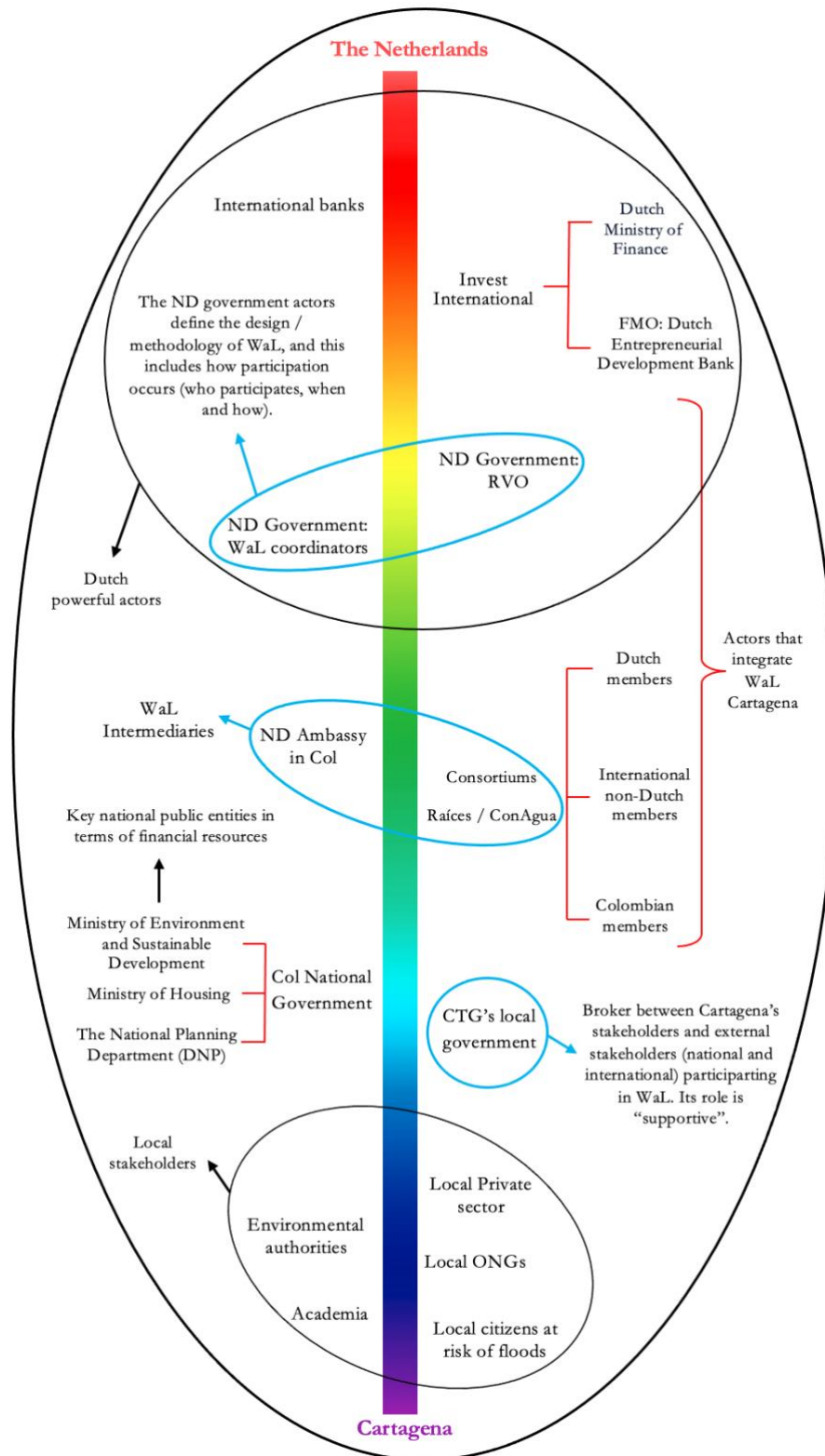
Upon analyzing the mapping of actors, their connections, and dynamics of power and participation, it became evident that although the structure is top-down and has been designed to connect the two clusters, local and Dutch, through the consortiums and the Mayor's Office as intermediaries. Nevertheless, observations and interviews showed that the local NGO from the perception of participants from La Ciénaga, has been the one facilitating their integration to WALC. The NGO is legitimate in the community because of its presence in the area for more than ten years, having first-hand knowledge of the territory's problems, and its people, which provides them with resources (knowledge, connections, and legitimacy) to influence the program by generating and facilitating conversations among La Ciénaga community and WaL actors about decisions related to the La Ciénaga hotspot.

Table 2. Actors involved in Water as Leverage Cartagena (Directly / Indirectly).

#	Actors	Description	Actor status	Role	Interest
1	Community	Colombians, from Cartagena. Located in flood risk areas. Mostly active citizens and local leaders of La Ciénaga de La Virgen.	Local / Cartagenero	Local WaL participants and potential beneficiaries of their solutions. Representation of the La Ciénaga community.	Influence the selection of WaL solutions to focus on La Ciénaga, with the aim of improving their living conditions through their implementation.
2	Private Sector representative	Colombian, Cartagenero. Representative of private companies in the city and region.	Local / Cartagenero	Local WaL participant. Provide information on CSR solutions presented in the city and aligned with WaL.	Influence the localization of the implementation of the solutions presented at WaL.
3	NGO	Colombian NGO, based in Cartagena, that has been working in La Ciénaga de La Virgen (GCU#6) for more than 10 years. Its local director is from Cartagena.	Local / Cartagenero	Local participant of WaL, representation of La Ciénaga de La Virgen. Provide information about CBS presented in the community that are aligned with WaL.	Ensure that at least one of the solutions selected to be implemented is in La Ciénaga.
4	EPA	Local environmental authority in charge of granting permits to projects in relation to their environmental impact.	Local / Cartagenero	Local WaL participants, advising in terms of environmental viability of the solutions presented by WaL.	Ensure that solutions fit into the city's culture and environmental legislation.
5	Cartagena's Government	Municipal authority represented by the mayor of the city, and the staff of the secretariat of International Cooperation and Infrastructure of the municipality.	Colombian / Broker	Support role as intermediary between locals/Cartagena residents and the consortia and WaL.	Improve the reputation of the government and provide a possible solution to the frequent water-related disasters in the city.
6	Consortiums (ConAgua and Raices)	Two multidisciplinary teams in charge of designing WaL Cartagena solutions. Conformed by NGOs, private companies and universities of Colombian, Bolivian, Spanish, Dutch and other nationalities.	External	Intermediate between WaL and locals/Cartageneros with the support of local government. Provide solutions, based on the identification of problems and needs.	Develop viable solutions based on budget and WaL standards to respond to WaL. Self reputational interest.
7	Dutch embassy in Colombia	Diplomats from Bogota, Colombia representing The Netherlands in Cartagena.	External	Dutch representation. Responsible for diplomatic relations and WaL sustainability between transitional governments.	Ensure the continuity of WaL regardless of who represents the local government.
8	WaL	Dutch government program in Asia and Latam, led by Dutch bureaucrats. WaL is part of RVO's trade and aid policy solutions/programs.	External	Design the WaL Methodology, define the consortia. Include Dutch public-private partnerships in the implementation phase. Obtain financing for implementation.	Ensure that the design and implementation of WaL happens and being scalable to more cities.
9	RVO	Dutch government enterprise agency, which is part of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy.	External	Provide funding to create Water as Leverage as a climate adaptation programme, which is part of the Aid and Trade Policy.	Ensure WaL success, boosting its reputation. Ensure its implementation for the Aid and Trade Policy.
10	Invest International	Dutch public private bank, is made up of the Ministry of Finance and the Dutch Business Development Bank.	External	Provide part of the funding to implement selected solutions in WaL	Increase investment in infrastructure solutions. Avoid programs that include community relocation since they are seen as "complicated."

Source: own elaboration based on observation and interviews, 2023

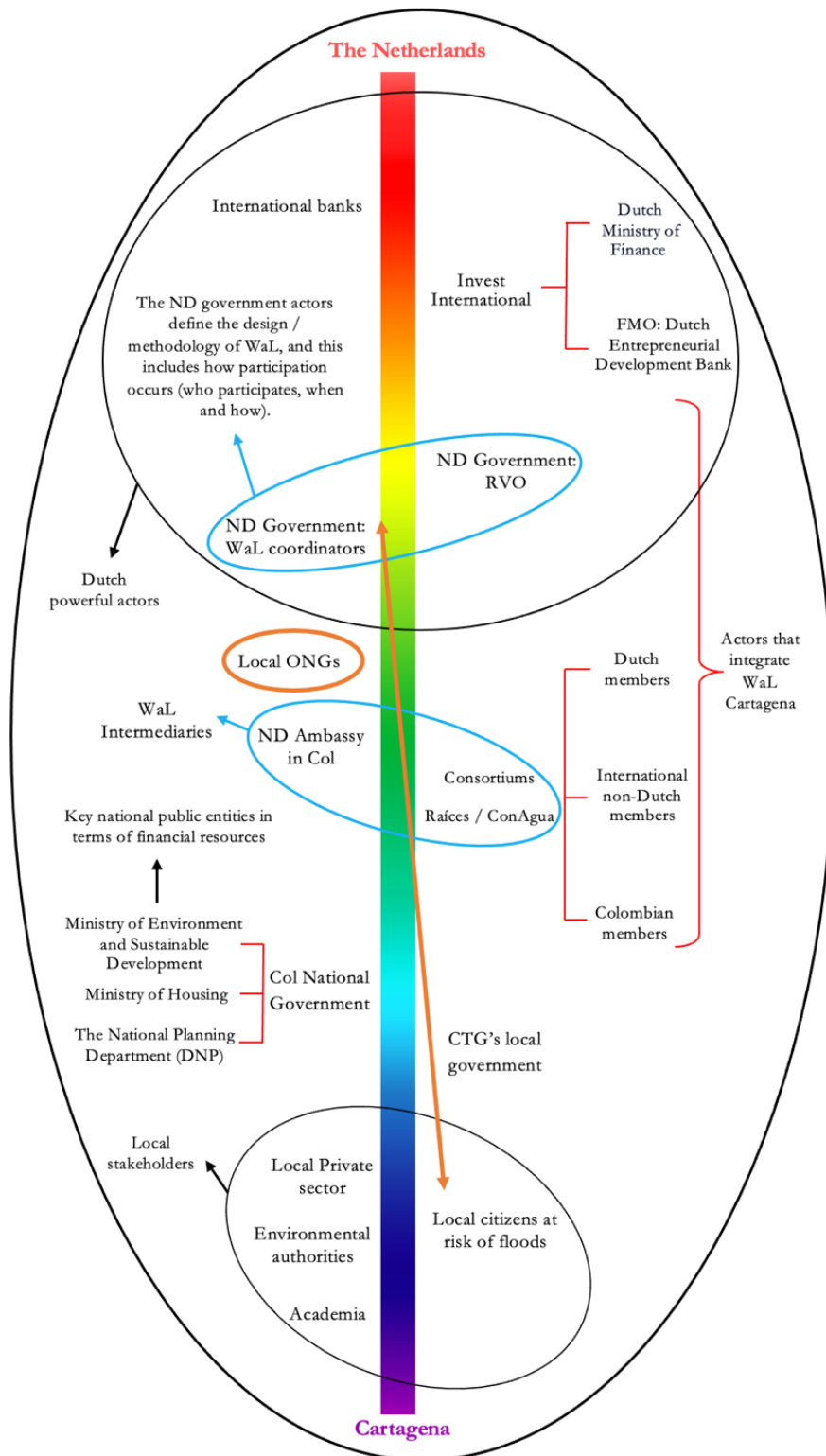
Figure 4. Mapping the spectrum of participating actors.



Source: own elaboration based on observation and interviews, 2023¹.

¹ Acronyms: CTG is Cartagena, COL is Colombia, ONG is NGO, ND is Netherlands.

Figure 5 Mapping of actors from La Ciénaga participants perception.



Source: own elaboration based on observation and interviews, 2023.

5.2. What is meant by participation?

This section is divided into two parts to delve into the distinct interpretations and layers of participation, according to the spectrum of actors involved. First examining the meaning of participation for locals, and second, analyzing the intermediaries (consortiums), and Dutch actor from The Netherlands.

5.2.1. Participation by local actors: Livelihoods, communication, and trust.

Through the analysis, I found that participation has diverse meanings for local actors involved in WaL. It was related to their livelihood conditions, their role within the program, and benefits they could have from its possible implementation. However, although different layers were presented in the understanding of participation, responses had two common elements when describing the ideal way to participate in WaL. The first element was the values of participation, as trust and solidarity, and the second element was communication as an integration strategy.

I visited UCG #6 twice, in La Ciénaga. Inhabitants who welcomed me were community leaders who had been working together with the local NGO associated with that territory for between 2 and 10 years, which is recognized in the city and by themselves as an illegal "invasion" of the swamp. One of them said,

"We landfill in the ground we were walking on, and we did it because we do not have the resources to pay for decent housing, and we know it is wrong, but we had no other options. Living here makes us vulnerable to all floods, but we have learned to be resilient."

When asking La Ciénaga participants what participation means to them, one mentioned,

"For us to participate is that they (Consortiums and WaL) come to the community, listen to us, and understand what we are going through here, know our relationship with the water, to participate is to have access to information beforehand so that we can process it and be able to say something about it, and that they help us to move forward, instead of them coming for a couple of days and no meeting was held here where we are affected".

The previous phrase was echoed by several attendees, who referred to participation as getting involved in WaL decisions to ensure that the program focused on proposing solutions that recover the swamp and generate work for them and be able to improve their livelihoods. Participants from La Ciénaga mentioned that it was essential that the consortiums and WaL understand the relationship that they have with the sea and the swamp, as a source of sustenance.

"Our company is bankrupt, which is the Ciénaga; we can no longer live from it... if we do not aim to recover our company, there will never be prosperity; we had to leave our business (fishmongers), now we are motorcycle taxi drivers and do not want that". Participant from La Ciénaga during September's workshop.

Research participants from La Ciénaga mentioned that solutions presented by WaL must be oriented to recover La Ciénaga so they can improve their livelihood. The above evidence

shows that participants expect economic benefits linked to cultural, social, and environmental processes reflected in water bodies' recovery, supporting Hasan et al. (2021) argument that participation, in this case in CAP, is not only about climate resilience. When asking the director of the NGO what participation meant to her, she said,

"Participation is that the community can talk horizontally with WaL, and this is not always possible in a dialogue table because there is experience when it comes to discussing, and some actors speak very technically about the problems and solutions, and what they do is cut off the conversation with the communities."

It can be argued that for actors at risk of flooding and NGOs working in those areas, participation is seen as a transformative sensitive tool to achieve programs and projects that can lead to improving their livelihood conditions through CAP. Additionally, it is a communicational tool that should allow integration of different actors to discuss horizontally. The analysis of the understanding of participation from La Cienega participants reflects that WaL methodology does not align with their perception, since there was not enough time to generate trust from dialogues with the consortia. This finding corroborates Andriani and Christoforou's (2016) argument that "relationships matter" to build social capital among different actors. From local's understanding of participation, WaL should provide access to information, training on technical topics, and hold meetings between the consortia and each sector, or mix them in small groups, instead of large meetings.

Andriani and Christoforou's argument (2016) that the lack of time, reciprocity, and trust with solutions that do not match the needs of recipients explains why for La Cienega and EPA participants, solutions presented by consortiums do not match their needs and the culture and environment culture of Cartagena. Since participation is based on inviting local actors from NGOs, the private sector, the community, and the EPA to the events to discuss WaL decisions, for local participants, the time allocated to discuss the problems and participate is not enough, and the result is programs disconnected from reality. Such was the case of the stilt houses solution presented by both consortiums.

"It is a solution that does not correspond to our culture, land conditions, ecosystem, and climate. Stilt houses are common in the Colombian Pacific due to the type of rocky soil of its marshes, but our marshes are muddy; I am concerned that they present solutions that also generate more mosquitos and, instead of helping, end up causing more tropical diseases". Participant from EPA.

"There are many projects that are not part of the local culture; the stilt houses here would attract more mosquitoes, dengue, chikungunya, all that.". Participant from La Ciénaga.

For local stakeholders, it is not only about being invited to large deliberation spaces that include heterogeneous groups with different power at the local, national, and international levels. Participation for local actors must go beyond that; it should allow them to be engaged, understand the program, develop close relationships with consortiums and WaL, and co-create solutions. The need for other spaces to develop trust and understanding of the needs and interests of each actor behind WaL was also mentioned.

"We need to have other spaces with WaL beyond the workshops so they can tell us what the consortiums are doing and to share with them the information we have about the programs we are doing in La Ciénega. We seek an opportunity to support our projects there or implement the new solutions through local PPP" Participant from private sector.

The above shows that for the private sector, participation is seen as a tool that develops connections between the actors who participate in WaL, which depends on the modes of communication to integrate the actors. When gathering all understandings of participation from local actors, it can be described as a tool to generate synergies between existing programs and development of new ones that improve livelihood conditions, create local business by distributing influence over decisions done in WALC among participants. However, according to them this is not happening yet in the program.

By analyzing participants' different definitions of participation, as Fung (2006) argues, some participation mechanisms can increase the exclusion of specific populations, particularly vulnerable communities, as at WALC. From the interviews, it is possible to affirm that this exclusion comes from limited access to information and little capacity of influence that local actors have over the program. Based on Fung's (2006) argument, local actors stay in "communication mode" but never move to a tangible "form of decision making," which means "vote and bargain," "deliberate," or even being considered "technical expertise."

"I think that, in effect, the moments (to dialogue) are insufficient because the problems in the city are so big, so complex that perhaps those of us who are here feel that perhaps it was not possible to go deeper into such a complex problem of the city." Participant from private sector.

"A workshop telling everyone how everything is going is not a validating space." Participant from La Ciénega during September's workshop.

Besides, they were in communication mode, "listening as a spectator, and expressing or developing preferences" (Fung, 2006); for research participants from La Ciénega, NGO, and the private sector, there was no time to understand each other, express themselves, and arrive at sustainable solutions owned by the community.

To conclude, understanding of participation varies according to their livelihood conditions. For the population at risk of flood, it is seen as a tool that allows citizens to influence decision-making and receive CAP that improve their quality of life. For NGOs, it is a tool that allows generation of horizontal discussions between actors with diverse intersectionalities and knowledge. For the private sector was understood as the opportunity to create synergies and integrate actors for everyday purposes. For all of them, it was a tool that allowed co-decision-making.

These different comprehensions of participation had common elements among local actors regarding the characteristics that should be present in its practice, like allocating more time for visits and meetings held with consortia to develop trust. Similarly, having access and exchange information and developing meetings focused by sector or with a smaller number of actors for better understanding between them to generate solutions that connect with the interests of the locals. The analysis reflects that participation has limitations and that there are different visions of it, which are distant from the practice when many diverse actors are involved in decision-making. In this sense, participation is understood in response to a wide range of interests that obey power relations and how roles are structured at the decision-

making table, in which some actors are left out; even if they are invited, they do not have the elements to enter the discussion.

5.2.2. Participation by Consortiums, WaL, and RVO: A dynamic tool that responds to affinity, tensions, and interests.

In this section, I present and analyze the understanding of participation by external factors involved in WALC, like consortiums and the Dutch government, represented by WALC, Embassy, and RVO. Analysis starts from the view of participants representing the Dutch government and then from understanding the consortiums as intermediaries of the program. Finally, I present an analysis of the commonalities between these actors.

Participation by RVO and WaL: One dynamic instrument and many actors.

Analysis of interviews with RVO and WALC participants and observations of DWS and WALC workshops showed that for these actors, participation is understood as a dynamic tool or "transitional journey" that changes the needs, interests, and agendas of the Dutch government, but also responds to the situations and power struggles that arise in the Cartagena context.

"I will describe participation as a transition journey. I started the discussion six years ago about what social inclusion is, and we have been close to academic research findings that said that Dutch water programs are not inclusive, are top-down, and developed only with high levels, and not paying attention to poor and vulnerable communities. We need to discuss this, inviting others to express their views in public participation." Participant from RVO.

"What participation entails is the empowerment of these (local NGO, government, communities, academia) stakeholders so that they can add their perspectives and value to what is being developed in this case." Participant from WaL.

These two visions of participation describe it as a tool that allows them to invite diverse actors to WaL as a sign of social inclusion, empowerment, and diversity. In practice, participation was understood as inviting many heterogeneous actors to participatory spaces, which were few and with limited time to dialogue. However, during the interviews and events, it was mentioned as a sign of the program's success in being inclusive.

"I believe that the process, the program, has had an inclusive and participatory approach in the sense that it has tried to invite as many as possible actors." Participant from Mayor's office.

The emphasis on the number of participants indicates the importance given to how many people are part of the process as constitutive of what participation is. However, I observed contradictions between the discourse and the practice of understanding participation as the empowerment of the locals or the inclusion of the perspectives of the marsh community. The first contradiction I was able to evidence in the workshops and interviews was that participation in practice was understood as a dynamic tool to enable or

limit the influence of local actors and Cartagena's mayor's office within the program, and whose involvement obeys the needs of WaL in each phase.

"September is the end of phase one, then the start of phase two, which is the pre-feasibility phase, is the selection of which of the conceptual designs are the most promising project for Cartagena, the consortiums have more time and budget available in that second phase as well to have more in-depth interaction." Participant from WaL.

Another contradiction is reflected in the structure of the program itself, in which participation is executed by intermediary consortia and in which the WaL staff is responsible for participation; as an RVO said, "We organize a process and multidisciplinary teams that are in charge organize a participatory process.". The result of the delegation of participation to the consortia, the limited presence of WaL in Cartagena as an accessible actor for the local cluster, and the lack of involvement of grassroots NGOs in La Ciénaga is evidence in practice that there has not been much change in terms of power relations between Dutch and local actors in the programs.

Finally, based on the interviews and observations, the intermediary structure must foster a better relationship between the Dutch and local clusters. The absence of direct trusting relationships, time constraints, language barriers, and other factors identified by local stakeholders as essential elements for ideal participation contribute to the lack of mutual understanding of each stakeholder's priorities, needs, and interests.

Participation by consortia: Intermediaries between affinity and constraints.

Analysis of interviews and observations showed that consortiums see participation as a tool that allows them to understand the context and obtain ideas, knowledge, and opinions of locals about possible solutions to address climate adaptation challenges. However, there is a variation in how it is practiced from one consortium to the other regarding sharing identities among participants since only one of both consortiums, ConAgua, has an office based in Colombia and The Netherlands, which impacts how they approach the process.

"We are the only design office based in both countries, and that for us has an important connotation: this is our country, and we have a great affinity and desire to contribute to a context like ours." Research participant from Consortium.

The affinity with locals and their needs played an essential role in the solutions presented, where ConAgua connected more with what the community asked for, and during the event, locals from La Ciénaga applauded them; they said they felt heard. Instead, the non-Colombian-based consortium, Raíces, had a more general perspective, presenting solutions in the four hotspots of the city, with extensive infrastructure solutions, more aligned with the requirements of European banks, which generated greater peace of mind among the WaL staff about the possibility of obtaining resources. Research participant from the ConAgua consortium recognized that how cooperation projects are structured, in this case WALC, creates a disincentive to achieve horizontal conversations in the first phases,

"The budget for participation is less robust than one would like. That represents an important challenge of maximizing the resources to generate participation, the budget limits us because people identify it as important, but still, on the scale of the projects, value is

always given more priority to engineering production, and this must evolve to rethink the economic structure of the projects."

The finding mentioned before relates to Cleaver's (1999) argument about the limitations of participation, and here, the most significant limitation for consortiums was the time allocated to reach the goals of supporting program's recipients while meeting the interests of those who establish the rules of the game.

"You cannot consult everyone in a city; on the one hand, it is never enough, and on the other hand, it is necessary to do the best possible.". Research participant from consortium.

He mentioned that they face time constraints and challenges in WALC to build trust and the limitations of participation itself,

"No matter how hard you try, there are always going to be people who are confused, and there are always to be people who do not understand and are upset. There will always be people who feel left out; there will always be people who think that is not enough".

The intermediary structure works with limited resources as part of WALC methodological times, deadlines, budget, and approach to design participatory tools used in the workshops and fieldwork to reach communities as part of the solution design process; in sum, the responsibility to make the process participatory.

Integrated understanding of participation by external actors: flexible limited mechanism.

When gathering the views from both RVO and WALC and the consortium participants, it is possible to say that their commonality in the understanding of participation is to see it as a flexible mechanism that is adapted to respond to the diverse interests, agenda, resources, and needs of those in positions of authority, as a member from ConAgua consortium said "With the few resources we have, we may or may not be able to carry out a participatory process, each moment had a specific response, because each moment is different.". For these actors, RVO, WALC, and consortia, participation is a changing tool that responds to their interests. However, since it involves a broad number of actors, changes are motivated by local tensions highlighted by local actors. The ability of some local actors, for instance the private sector, to influence changes in the program despite being only invited and not having a role in WALC was mentioned by the private sector participant who referred to a possible corruption event that occurred in WALC in 2022, (El Universal, 2023b).

"We used social media to demand changes in WaL when there was a scandal about FEM NGO as a member of one of the consortiums; we did not like it, so we published a press release that was shown in newspapers, social media, and the local and national news programs. " Participant from private sector.

Pressure from the private sector resulted in the voluntary withdrawal of "FEM" NGO as part of the consortium. Nevertheless, WaL staff claimed it was a transparent selection process. What was mentioned before relates to Foucault's (1979, cited in Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015) argument that power is always present in social relations and challenges Fung's (2006) understanding of the authority and power of influence in participation, which in the Democracy Cube is divided into static degrees of influence. However, in Cartagena's case, critical local actors, like Private Sectors and ONGs, power of influence fluctuates, generating changes in the process. Additionally, this finding also reflects that the local participants from La Ciénaga, who have historically demanded solutions focused on their area, see WALC as a golden opportunity to improve their conditions. From the interviews, participants may want to have preponderant roles to ensure that the solution reaches them; they want to avoid "unfulfilled promises" by WALC. Local participants mentioned the need for local government to regulate the process to make it participatory and transparent,

"Guarantee access to information on the technical and financial execution of the project, in real-time or at appropriate moments, to enable effective social control... Publish those documents that consolidate commitments to ethical, legal and sustainability management of the cooperant in its agreement, contract or agreement with the Mayor's Office" (Funcicar, 2023b).

In conclusion, for RVO, WaL, and consortiums, the view of participation as a dynamic but complex tool that changes according to the moment in response to their interest and conflictual relations among actors, supports Cleaver's (1999) idea that participation is not always practical, exposing the challenges to reach horizontal conversations and WG in real life, where shared authority is missed (McCall et al., 2011).

5.3. The narratives behind the understanding of participation

This section focuses on analyzing the narratives behind each stakeholder's understanding of the role of participation mentioned in the previous chapter, as well as why. Initially I addressed the "expert narrative" from external actors (consortiums and Dutch government staff), and how that translates into their understanding and practice of participation, and secondly, I examined the narrative referred to in this paper as "diversity co-sensing", which explains how local stakeholders understand and want to practice participation in a bottom-up way. Also, I explained why the local government navigates between both logics.

5.3.1. Dutch Water Sector: Facilitation narrative.

During my fieldwork, I found multiple examples of how the Dutch government actors, from WaL and RVO, were trying to respond to persistent criticisms raised by academia, local communities, and NGOs focused on the issue of social exclusion within Dutch water projects stemming from their hierarchical, top-down structures. An example was of how RVO and WaL were trying to counteract that reputational damage in WALC was a shift strategy to change the narrative of "Bring in the Dutch" by mentioning several times that their structure had changed, as one Dutch research participant from WaL mentioned, "I think that the era of "bring in the Dutch is really behind us." The analysis showed essential changes in the Dutch actors' narrative, where they are now repositioning themselves as "Facilitators."

"We are facilitators of water knowledge. From RVO and WaL, our position is to facilitate and be a connector of the knowledge that is not present locally." Participant from WaL.

The interviews, observations, and social media content analysis of WaL and RVO reflected this new narrative with four main arguments. First, an apparent "lack of knowledge" of CAP in global south cities; second, an emphasis on generalizing WCA challenges "as uniform threats across the globe and social classes," as one intermediary said. The third is an allegation that CAP "cannot be resolved at a local level due to lack of financial and institutional resources," as one participant mentioned. The fourth is that there is a hurry to fix the problems, so solutions must be provided quickly, and international cooperation with them is the solution. From the Dutch actors' perspective, the discourse of the "water knowledge facilitators" narrative is to engage with local actors and develop solutions that fit the local situation.

Nevertheless, in practice, Dutch knowledge, technology, and economic resources are privileged in the cooperation established between the municipality of Cartagena and the government of The Netherlands through WaL. As a WaL participant referred, "Cartagena has limited institutional and financial capacity" since "communities need solutions yesterday instead of in three or ten years." The previous finding shows that the logic of this narrative is to push for the international privatization of water adaptation by the idea of facilitation, to implement WaL by Dutch companies as a solution to move quickly from water as a threat to water as a leverage due to cooperation.

From interviews from RVO and WaL, this narrative looks to change the plot of bringing the Dutch by creating the intermediary function of national and international NGOs and companies that conform to the "holistic and multidisciplinary" consortiums selected by the Dutch with their criteria. However, this critical decision did not include Colombia's national and Cartagena governments in the process; as part of the Aid and Trade Policy, all decisions

must be made by the Dutch government. Another essential point behind the why of using a facilitator narrative, mentioned by WaL research participant during the interview and the workshops, is the possibility of selling WaL as a methodology that can be escalated in America and Africa, or other words, translated into different languages, with the support of the multidisciplinary and expert teams, as a tailored solution for climate change.

As Richter (2020) argued, the translation done by intermediaries poses two dilemmas: one regarding what is or is not a successful translation and for whom, and the other one related to the interest behind it. When analyzing the first dilemma, translation as a process, in Cartagena, it was possible to observe levels of misunderstanding between consortium members, WaL staff, and participants from La Ciénaga during the workshops and interviews. Based on the interviews with participants from La Ciénaga and the NGO, it is possible to interpret that this happens due to the limited space and time allocated within the WaL project for developing trust via extended dialogues, resulting in solutions that do not always come from consensus.

One intermediary said, "The challenges of Cartagena are a union of the problems of Rio de Janeiro, Amsterdam, Venice, and San Francisco... water does not understand classes". Richter's (2020) argument that translating policies requires being open to culture, the local language, climate, and context, among other local characteristics, allows me to infer that the processes of translation and program travel are so complex that they require the involvement of all actors, beyond the idea of intermediaries. Being based on Richter's (2020) argument is essential to avoid simplifications and generalizations about the effects of climate change on different populations.

In terms of the interest behind the translation done by this narrative, there is an interest in promoting a vision of resilient cities based on multi-million-dollar infrastructure projects, e.g., dams and water pumps, among others, whose budgets presented in the financial workshop in September of 2023 are between 23 and 497 million dollars. In this sense, the focus of implementing general infrastructure for CAP offers limited opportunities to solve structural problems, e.g., poverty, inequality, and migration, among others, that require dialogue to be translated to what locals need and want. Consortiums' use of social media to reach poor populations resulted in miscommunication among participants from La Ciénaga who do not have internet access and complained about the process as non-participatory. However, from the consortium point of view, the problem was not the communication channels but the "lack of awareness" or interest of locals in participating in WaL.

"There is little ownership, great complaining, and lack of commitment from locals, even if you sent the invitations 20 times and asked them to go, and they did not feel like going. Then they will say they did not consult me; poor me.". Participant from ConAgua consortium.

Different views and interests behind participation for each actor shape the perception of the correct communication mode to be involved in WaL. In this case, for research participants from La Ciénaga, traditional channels e.g., physical newspapers and in-person visits are the way to be informed concerning their livelihood assets. At the same time, for consortiums, social media is the standard and best way to do it. During my discussion with research participants from local government, I asked them about why they are using mainly social media to reach poor populations,

"We (the international cooperation office) are part of the support track with the infrastructure and planning secretaries, and we participate, but it is not our responsibility; it is the responsibility of Consortiums." Participant from local Mayor's office.

It was possible to observe misunderstanding or disconnection from WaL and consortiums with the socioeconomic conditions of La Ciénaga de La Virgen hotspot, where 89.1% of the residents live under different levels of poverty (Espinosa et al., 2017:11), it is possible to say that this reflects why there is a disinformation of participants from this area since the communication channels cannot reach them. While discussing communication channels, Locals saw the lack of communication from another point of view, where the "complaining and disinterest" is the effect of the type and the form to communicate things used by WaL.

"Few local leaders from the communities at risk have been at the workshops and events, the mayor's office initiated without socializing it with the community in the community." Participant from WaL.

From the statement, it is possible to argue that due to the low availability of information and lack of diversification of communication channels according to the type of local actors, citizens from La Ciénaga and Cartagena generally do not know about the program. Gaventa and Cornwall's (2015:46) state that no access to information results in a passive, expectant, and uncritical culture of silence form of participation served to analyze why, in this case, the communication channels were affecting the involvement of actors in vulnerable conditions. Additionally, the local actors' lack of ownership of the program or awareness gap mentioned by consortia and WaL during interviews and workshops demonstrates that the travel of the WaL program from The Netherlands to Cartagena is a complex process where interaction among actors is essential as Mukhtarov (2014b:76) said,

"Policy translation, in turn, suggests that the process of the travel of policy ideas is affected by complex interactions of multiple factors, and characteristics of policy ideas taken in an abstract sense provide little help in judging possible outcomes of the travel."

In conclusion, the narrative of the Dutch government facilitators leads them to understand participation as inviting diverse local actors to listen and, in turn, be heard, fulfilling the requirement of access to local information and positioning. When analyzing the findings, it is possible to argue that from this narrative, participation is not understood in terms of quality but quantity, assigning roles to local actors under the interests around each phase. The use of facilitation narrative understands the quantity of participants as a sign of quality and social inclusion. Moreover, allow the control over decisions by one actor while outsourcing of participation outcomes. At the same time, it is seen as a discursive tool to position WaL as a partnership methodology or policy that can be translated worldwide.

5.3.2. Local participants: The diversity co-sensing narrative.

The analysis allowed me to observe that local actors in Cartagena use a narrative that I called "diversity co-sensing". The diversity co-sensing narrative arises from the understanding of participation by local actors as a process based on relationships of trust, communication, and

quality time, that facilitates co-creating, co-feeling and co-ownership of solutions. Based on interviews and observation from workshops, it is possible to say that the logic behind the "diversity co-sensing" narrative obey to the need of local actors, particularly from La Ciénaga, for creating trust-building spaces to be heard, seen, and considered in decision-making.

The narrative is framed by the idea that if WaL improve the time and sensitivity to create trust and integrate local actors, the solutions will reflect the diversity of needs, socioeconomic conditions, environmental culture, and language present within a community as mixed as Cartagena is. However, from the point of view of participants from the NGO, EPA, La Ciénaga and the private sector, the WALC participation structure does not understand or capture the diversity of needs, identities and interests they have about the program. According to Hasan et al. (2021), CAP and policy translation requires time and active engagement to develop relations of trust, solidarity among local actors themselves, and between local actors and international actors, or between countries. Hasan et al. (2021) argument helps to explain how the narrative used by local actors claims mutual learning, instead of receiving the solutions from consortia.

During interviews research participants from private sector, La Ciénaga, EPA and NGO mentioned three elements they wanted to challenge from the current WaL structure, that I integrated as part of the narrative. First, the lack of sufficient spaces created by consortiums or WaL to understand the local context; second, absence of grassroots NGOs from the hotspots, as part of the consortia. Third, a call for transparency and political justice by including them (local actors) in the decisions that can affect their future, which should be co-created. The requirements mentioned by local actors can be related to the solutions to legitimacy problems presented by Fung (2006), where communication and grassroots organizations integration are central to ensure decisions based on consensus. The legitimacy problem mentioned by locals reflects what Fung's (2006) points out as the result of decision-making part of closed circles.

"If this project wants legitimacy, they should involve grassroots organizations working in the territory and carry out activities with them, in the areas where there will be an impact". A participant from La Ciénaga during September's workshop.

"These are mega-projects that take millions and millions of pesos, but sometimes people do not want that; we want programs that feel we are real beneficiaries, and for that, they must listen to what we need, which is job". A participant from La Ciénaga during September's workshop.

It is possible to infer from structure of roles and responsibilities in WALC, participatory tools used to engage with local participants from La Ciénaga, that hierarchical cooperation diminish the possibility to reach symmetrical conversations (Hasan et al., 2021) when doing policy translation. Furthermore, it also reflects the challenges that people in conditions of vulnerability face in hierarchical structures to be engaged in decision-making. Hence, the diversity co-sensing narrative could be a solution to facilitate their integration in WaL, by using horizontal participation to ensure that WaL solutions help them have a dignified life.

In the September workshop, some examples were evident that denoted the absence of the integration of socioeconomic conditions, and interests of participants in the decision making associated to the local design workshop. One of the key examples was the execution of the workshops in fancy venues of the city, far away from La Ciénaga reality and location, instead of looking for a central venue for all the actors, as some of participants mentioned.

The local workshop in September was done during a “day without motorcycles” in Cartagena, which is equivalent to chaos for impoverished communities, which depend on this means of transportation (González, 2022).

“As community leaders from impoverished neighborhoods, we have many things to solve, and coming to this event is a great effort because, we have to decide whether to eat during the day or travel to the event.” A participant from La Ciénaga during September’s workshop.

The participatory method selected by consortia for local actors to evaluate the solutions and show their preferences, was a complex matrix provided to participants, that were mostly from La Ciénaga. According to participants from La Ciénaga, time was not enough for them to understand, moreover, they did not comprehend the solutions, or even know the terminology, while others were illiterate, as a result I could observe that some of participants did not evaluate the solutions, and others did it erroneously.

“Sometimes we do not understand, that is why we do not pay attention to the event, also in two minutes, I do not talk, and I cannot say what I feel.” A participant from La Ciénaga during September’s workshop.

The absence of dialogue among local, consortiums and WaL resulted in solutions that according to participants from EPA and La Ciénaga do not match with the local context, like the stilt houses solution presented by both consortiums.

“It is a solution that does not correspond to our culture, land conditions, ecosystem, and climate. Stilt houses are common in the Colombian Pacific due to the type of rocky soil of its marshes, but our marshes are muddy... I am concerned that they present solutions that also generate mosquito breeding grounds and, instead of helping, end up causing more tropical diseases”.

This was also mentioned by another research participant during a transect walk in La Ciénaga,

“There are many projects that were presented that we do not understand or are not part of the local culture, the stilt houses here would attract more mosquitoes, dengue, chikungunya, all that.”.

These decisions showed that possibly the consortiums are not achieving connection with the actors in the territories, and therefore, they make decisions that, instead of facilitating inclusion, generate limitations for La Ciénaga people to participate, producing irrelevant solutions for the context. The examples mentioned follow Twigg’s (2015) argument that “time, trust and transparency” are a key element to build meaningful relations, implement activities in accordance with the communities, and providing the data to be informed.

The research participant from the private sector also mentioned that there was not enough time allocated for dialogue and understand the solutions, and when he tried to look for more information on WaL websites information presented during workshops was not available online. Gaventa and Cornwall (2015) argued that exercise through information

access, and knowledge imbalances, stimulating or discouraging participation, which can explain why La Ciénega, and private sector participants do not have access to information or do not know the terminology affects their engagement with WaL. Information access was seen in double way, since participants mentioned that they also have knowledge to share that must be included in WaL solutions.

Solidarity as central element for climate resilience:

Another important finding related to the co-sensing narrative was the interpretation of solidarity as the central axis of climate resilience in the community. According to participants from La Ciénega, the solidarity generated within the community because of the floods and disasters such as Hurricane IOTA in 2020, allowed the generation of social capital and the integration of the inhabitants of the area, which according to them included displaced people from the south of Bolívar, Venezuelan migrants, and some of the poor population of the city of Cartagena.

“The solidarity that was generated during the disaster was what sustained the community, feeling in the hearts of others was the only thing that sustained me. The fact that we all felt touched by the same problem was shocking.” A participant from La Ciénega during the timeline workshop.

The above confirms Twigg's (2015) arguments about the importance of social capital for households exposed to natural hazards, as a survival strategy, which if extrapolated to WaL, refers to a narrative that seeks to ensure that consortium are empathetic, supportive, and sensitive to the circumstances that occur in the territory, that is to feel in the heart of the other, as a symbolism that takes importance. The two times I visited the Olaya Herrera neighbourhood in La Ciénega, participants told me that the visit was not complete without a canoe tour, so I can see how their daily life is and how it is affected during floods in solidarity with them. The canoe is part of the culture, history, the joy, and struggle of Cartagena, and is a simple example and gesture of what it means to feel in the heart of another.

During the canoe tour they told me that when consortiums visited the areas, they asked them to do the canoe tour as well to show them how the problem looks from within. The symbolism of the canoe as solidarity and co-sensing supports Mukhtarov (2014b:77) argument that during policy translation, such as in the case of WaL, “studying the role of ideas, discourses, non-material symbols and norms in shaping identities and interests of actors is integral to policy translation”. The diversity co-sensing narrative can be also described as the capacity to connect as humans, through solidarity as the basis to co-design solutions that reflect the needs of the territory.

Lord's (1978) explanation of erotic as power, as a collective power of joy to reach common causes, is useful to explain that under the logic of La Ciénega participants, sensitivity, trust, and solidarity are understood as a form of collective power exercise over participation, to co-create solutions. This notion of power links to McCall and Peters-Guarin (2012) notions of inclusivity and sustainability in DRR and climate adaptation programs if local communities are the center of decision-making. Based on the interviews and observations, the practice of this narrative under the solidarity lenses could be described as the "grassroots co-governance" of WALC, where grassroots NGOs, community, CSR, and private sector representatives, are formally part of the consortiums. According to locals from

the NGO, these adjustments could increase opportunities for knowledge exchange between consortiums, locals, WaL and RVO, and then reach accurate solutions for the context.

"We need governance strategies where all the actors can participate, to guarantee the sustainability of the process, working groups can be established, like follow-up tools. Co-governate WaL can allow people to have perhaps a little more information on how the process is going, what difficulties have been encountered and how to guarantee that the process continues in the future". A participant from the NGO.

The Diversity co-sensing narrative seeks to share the power, which is the opposite of the facilitator or "promotional narrative" (Hasan et al., 2021). According to Hasan et al. (2021) actors operating within this narrative do not include local knowledge in decision-making, that is still based on "experts" and technical solutions approach.

In conclusion, this section reveals the complex interaction between the DWS facilitation narrative and the narrative of diversity co-sensing the diversity of local participants. The Dutch government's narrative, characterized as a shift from a top-down "bring in the Dutch" approach to a more facilitative role, aims to address concerns of social exclusion within DWS. Nevertheless, the change is nuanced in practice, because of Dutch knowledge and resources predominance in cooperation, which raised the question about the nature of this narrative and the impact on the involvement of local actors, particularly participants from La Ciénaga. I also engaged with the facilitation narrative as a tool to engage local actors and to position WaL as a methodology that can be translated worldwide.

Besides, the diversity co-sensing narrative shared among local participants, especially those from La Ciénaga, emphasized the importance of trust, communication, and quality time in the participatory process. The finding showed that this narrative tries to challenge the existing structure of WaL, and highlights worries about the lack of space to understand the local context, the absence of grassroots NGOs in consortiums, and the need for transparency and political justice in decision-making. Some characteristics of this narrative are time, trust, and dialogue for meaningful engagement, advocating for a more horizontal and inclusive approach to ensure that WaL solutions address diverse community needs, identities, and interests.

5.4. Forms of participation

In this section, I analyze the forms of participation applied in WALC based on the understanding and narratives of participation discussed in previous sections. During the fieldwork, I observed various forms of participation practiced by various local, national, and international stakeholders, some integrated within the program and others operating independently. Based on theories and typologies, e.g., the typology of participation, the democracy cube, and paradoxes of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2015; Oakley, 1991; White, 1996; Cleaver, 1999; Fung, 2006), and the interviews and observations I developed in table 2 to describe the forms of participation I observed in WALC. From the literature the forms presented were nominal, consultative, and transformative, which is presented as integrative / sensitive.

The forms of participation and strategies highlighted in table 3 reflect that WALC presents a variety of linkage and communication that influence the decision-making that based on Fung's (2006) cube, those decisions will remain with the public on some occasions. It was noted that the communication and involvement strategies define the level of authority of the actors in the program and the existing dynamics between participants (Fung, 2006). In this sense, the observations denoted a direct hierarchical relationship between the forms of support, and intermediation with that of facilitation, in which the mayor of Cartagena, the consortia and finally RVO and WaL interact in response to pre-established and static roles within the program.

Conversely, among local participants, depending on the occasion, their form of participation changed, however, they were mainly seen as providers and recipients of information. The above agrees with the argument presented by Wehn et al. (2015), who explains that DRR and CAP in their initial phases usually involve "common" participants as part of the exchange of information, spectators and executors of tasks designed by authorities, which in this case would be WaL, and the consortia. WaL and RVO perceive that the WALC design phases are important in technical matters, therefore, the expertise takes the leads, and that is why they limit the participation of local actors in the design phase. The above reinforces the argument of Wehn et al (2015) that the planning processes of DRR or CAP are configured to increase the influence on decision-making by citizens in the implementation phases of the solutions.

"Basically, the experts put together a series of proposals that are then socialized with the citizenry in specific cases, and through meetings and local events, feedback is collected to adjust the designs as the dialogue progresses." Participant from local Mayor's office.

During interviews with RVO and WaL participants they mentioned the bankability of WALC as one of the main challenges of the program, and the importance of having two multidisciplinary consortiums as experts to guide the process,

"A challenging topic is making sure the financing arrangements because a technical solution represents technical challenges. You can ask the technical experts to define one and they will be able to do so, but that will not mean automatically that is going to be implemented." Research participant from WaL.

From the previous quote it is possible to say that from the perception of WaL and RVO participants, CAP is technical, and must respond to the banks' requirements to be bankable, which means complying with the banks' requirements. The great challenge that this premise presents is that when returning to the findings of what participation means, and the narrative related to CAP that aim to improve the quality of life and generate work, a discordance is noted between the solutions demanded by the community and the technical and financeable solutions presented. It can be said that if CAP continue to be understood as technical and large infrastructure by banks and cooperating countries, it will be difficult to move from expertise as a guide to designs, to the inclusion of local knowledge horizontally.

The argument of Gaventa and Cornwall (2015) that presents knowledge as power, allows to explain why the knowledge in terms of financial matters can be seen as more valued than local knowledge about culture and environment, when trying to ensure founding for implementation of programs. However, from my observations of the workshops, locals tried to go beyond the forms of participation presented by WaL and resist the leadership of the program by Consortiums and foreign knowledge. They said that they wanted to be included. The complexities mentioned before, the dynamism of the forms, and the external factors influence how participation happens.

From observations and interviews, I designed five criteria to indicate the impact of the strategies implemented by WALC in the facilitation of integration between local actors and the consortiums, based on local participants understanding and narrative of participation. The criteria to evaluate them were I. time requirement, II. level of trust, III. level of conflict of interest, IV. facilitates participation, and V. level of access for people in vulnerable conditions, and the level of impact was divided by low, medium, and high. Table 4 shows that from local actors' point of view, the strategies WALC implemented require high investment of resources to be able to integrate local participants and consortiums. Additionally, accessibility of the strategies for people in vulnerable conditions is low, and the strategy with the highest impact was visiting the hotspot.

In conclusion, in this section, I present an analysis of the forms of participation observed in WALC and various dynamics in the interaction of the participating actors. The forms of participation presented explain the communication and linkage strategies within WALC, based on hierarchical relationships between actors, such as the mayor of Cartagena, the consortium, NGOs, community, private sector, EPA, RVO and WaL. Through this analysis, I demonstrated that the pre-established roles of WaL determine the decision-making dynamics. In that sense, local participants were seen as providers and recipients of information, changing depending on the occasion. Finally, I present five criteria to evaluate the impact of WALC strategies on enabling local participation. The analysis demonstrated that a high investment of resources is required to integrate vulnerable populations in WaL.

Table 3. Participation understanding and narratives in practice.

Forms of participation	Aim	Strategies		Effect on Power Imbalance
Sensitive / Integrative	Utilize grassroots participation to enhance the legitimacy, accuracy, and sustainability of locally-driven development programs created, owned, and financed at the local level.	Communication	Connecting with local networks and CBOs, in situ conversations, information available in real time and with easy access, Colombia's national government involvement	Enhance local ownership of programs, ensuring community-centric results through meaningful, horizontal conversations that prioritize vulnerable communities, includes national government, and works primarily based on public finance.
		Involvement	Shared language, clear roles and responsibilities of local actors, integration of climate adaptation and livelihood solutions, local champions and interlocutors	
Facilitator	Centralize decision-making authority and delegate social inclusion responsibilities to intermediaries.	Communication	Offer program participation guidelines to intermediaries around information, timing, budget, scope, methodology, and other resources.	Sustains existing power imbalances, consolidating control within a single actor or sector among the various international cooperation stakeholders.
		Involvement	Unilateral program design governance with selective invitations to key supportive actors.	
Intermediary	Establish a multidisciplinary team of national and international "experts" to link the Dutch Government with local actors.	Communication	Accessing guidelines from the Dutch and Cartagena governments, they determine information sharing with other actors.	The involvement of new local, international, and Dutch intermediaries reshapes power dynamics at the top level, with some of local intermediaries advocating for vulnerable communities and others adhering to Dutch instructions.
		Involvement	Spearhead the design strategy, including participatory tools, leveraging influence under Dutch government guidelines.	
Supportive	Offer a platform for local government to support the program, ensuring control over decision-making influence and	Communication	Diplomatic relations, consultation, representation during events	Exacerbates macro power imbalances between governments, perpetuating unilateralism and diminishing local and national Colombia government oversight of the program.
		Involvement	A defined yet limited role for a passive local government in external government decision-making.	
Consultive	Gather ideas from local actors to understand the city's issues and potential solutions, while enhancing the Dutch perspective's reputation regarding social inclusion.	Communication	Direct contact and event invitations to key local actors, but, information is not shared neither before nor after events.	This form offers local actors the opportunity to influence decisions, although indirectly, which can still perpetuate disparities.
		Involvement	Local actors express preferences through workshops involving voting, post-its, mapping, and brief discussions, along with site visits for discussions with CBOs.	
Nominal	Update stakeholders on program status based on the number of people reached.	Communication	Social media outreach via Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, and email, but incomplete or missing solution information on websites.	Amplifies top-down processes, hierarchical power imbalances, and favors bank and private sector interests over vulnerable communities voices.
		Involvement	Spectator in major events, and receiving information through social media. No interaction.	

Source: own elaboration based on observations and interviews, 2023.

Table 4 Complexity of participatory strategies of WaL

Participatory strategies in WaL Cartagena phase 1	Responsible for strategy implementation	Key actors involved	Time required	Contribution to the development of trust between the parties	Probability of conflict of interest	Accessibility for people in vulnerable situations	Current impact on the facilitation of integration between local actors and consortiums
Local design workshops	Consortiums	Consortiums, local government, NGOs, CBOs, Private Sector, ND embassy, RVO, WaL, Academia, EPA	High	High	High	Low	Medium
Local forum	WaL staff and consortiums	Consortiums, local government, NGOs, CBOs, Private Sector, ND embassy, RVO, WaL, Academia, EPA	Medium	Medium	Low	Low	Low
Financial workshop	WaL staff, consortiums, Ctg government	Consortiums, Cartagena government, Colombia's national government and its financial institutions, International Development banks, ND embassy, RVO, WaL, Dutch private sector	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	Low
Hotspot visits (including activities with communities)	Consortiums	Consortiums, NGOs, CBOs	High	High	High	High	High
Communication channels - follow ups (newsletter, instagram, youtube, whatsApp, etc.)	Consortiums	Consortiums and actors with access to technological assets	High	High	Medium	Low	Medium / Low
WaL Cartagena website and information availability	RVO	RVO and actors with access to technological assets	Low	High	Medium	Low	Low
Diplomatic channels	ND Embassy	ND Embassy, Local and National Government (Col)	High / High	High	Medium	Low	Low

Source: own elaboration based on observations and interviews, 2023

5.5. Local authority's charisma and political context perception: a key element to determine local government role in WaL base.

In this section, I analyzed Cartagena's Mayor charisma's impact in defining the relationship of trust among governmental actors from Cartagena and The Netherlands (WaL and RVO) as it was the component of the difference of WALC compared with WaL Asia (WALA). Here, I explained how the perception of local context and authority defines local governments' involvement in WaL.

In general, WaL methodology is determined by WaL and RVO, and it involves local governments as partners during the process, as an intermediary with local participants. From research papers and WAL websites, I observed that in WALA countries, the approach to local governments in WAL methodology was focused on building intuitional capacity at the local level through activities. They were focused on knowledge integration, local knowledge, single and double-loop learning, inclusiveness, shared values, network integration, local ownership, resource mobilization, policy alignment, building narrative, and change agents (Laeni et al., 2020). The previously mentioned activities were the strategies WaL and RVO adopted to ensure the legitimacy of WALA through local government involvement.

However, based on my readings and observations, I noted that the involvement between local governments in WALA countries and WaL and RVO staff could have been more than Cartagena's Mayor in WALC. According to Laeni et al. (2020:11), some of the WALA government officials claimed that there was a space for improvement in the methodology to reach the co-creation process since the design phase focused on technical expertise privileged consortiums rather than local knowledge and authority officials. The above reflects that there is a pattern in the legitimation of expertise as a definition for power and decision-making influences regarding the design of solutions within WaL, as this was repeated in WALA and is now present in WALC (Gaventa and Cornwall,

When I asked about explanations of this issue and the type of relation with WALA countries' governments to the participant from RVO, he said,

"In Asia, there was hardly formal involvement (with local government). In Asia, the main obstacle for community involvement was the weak municipality government ownership of the program to bring this type of project further".

In Cartagena's case, I found evidence of a good relationship between the mayor of Cartagena, government officials from the secretaries of infrastructure, planning, international cooperation, and the representatives of WaL, the Dutch embassy and RVO. During the interviews and observations, the participants working in the mayor's office mentioned that there is a good relationship with governmental partners. In executing the local design workshops, WaL stakeholders also presented the mayor and local government officials as critical partners in supporting WALA execution.

In each of the mayor's interventions and his Instagram posts, I found positive mentions regarding WALA, the former and current Water Envoy, the idea of the Dutch expertise, and the promotion of this methodology as the solution for the city. When participants from WaL and RVO talked about the relationship with Cartagena's Mayor, they referred to its personality as a critical element that fostered their partnership and improved its supportive role in the program. The local mayor from Cartagena spoke in English with Dutch actors and followed the narrative of Dutch expertise or facilitators mentioned before.

"In Cartagena, I see stronger ownership and coordination with the municipality government, which gives me hope. The mayor is inspiring, enthusiastic, charismatic, and committed"—participant from RVO.

Therefore, it is possible that charisma, language, and shared understanding of needs determine perception factors that define the role or level of authority WaL grants to local governments within the methodology. The integration between government officials from the local level and the Dutch government in WALA and WALC is differentiated by that. On the other hand, it was also seen that even if the local mayor was trustworthy enough to be involved in WaL, the city's political history played a crucial role in the type of involvement that WaL designed for the Cartagena's Municipality. According to a research participant from WaL, it was essential to include local government with limited power of influence to avoid corruption of the WALC program or the politicization of the program by being claimed as a politician project instead of a city long-term program.

"I think that that is an important role (local government), but if the local government would be very much at the forefront, very much pushing everything, then it would be a political program, and we are trying to avoid it becoming a political program because that will hamper the continuity of this program in times of elections like this year, for example"—WaL research participant during an interview.

In this case, it is possible to demonstrate that political context is another determined factor that contributed to WaL and RVO perception and definition of the roles of Cartagena's government as a cooperant in WaL. Table 3 shows the mayor's office participating as a support or local ally, which, during the observations, could be understood as a way of giving legitimacy to the program in the city. However, when analyzing the discourse of possible politicization as an argument to avoid greater involvement of the local government, the premise of DWS represented by WaL and RVO as the facilitators was raised. The narrative of facilitators of knowledge integration through intermediaries was crucial for establishing the idea that both actors (The Mayor's Office and WaL) were co-governing the partnership during local workshops and events.

From the above, WaL and RVO participants' positive perception of local government defines its involvement. However, local political context perception defines the level of authority in the decision-making, the level of information access, and the status given. Perception influences the rule game of authority in WaL water governance (Grindle, 2007). The previous analysis reflects that WaL possesses a top-down relationship with partners from local governments from the south that varies in intensity of inclusion, which the Dutch government defines as perception. Fung's (2006) ideas of justice and injustice, where justice depends on information access, influence over the agenda, capacity to influence decisions and that those decisions match with the needs of locals, support the argument that these forms of CAP or partnerships foster power imbalances among its participants.

In conclusion, in this finding, I explained how the charisma of the mayor of Cartagena and its impact on trust dynamics between government actors in Cartagena and the Netherlands within the WaL methodology reflects the complexities of local government participation in relation to power dynamics. Here, I presented the influence of personal leadership characteristics, like charisma, language, and shared understanding of needs, in shaping the perception and level of authority granted to local governments in the WaL process.

Furthermore, I also explore how the political context, in which local political dynamics, the history of corruption, and the avoidance of politicization played a crucial role in defining the participation and roles of local governments in the WaL program. Additionally, I compared the experiences of WALA and WALC, where I observed a persistence of limited involvement of local governments in WaL methodology. Finally, I present perception as an element for WaL to define roles, levels of authority, and access to information, emphasizing the power imbalances in this cooperation.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and reflections

This research analyzed the limitations and opportunities presented by local participation in CAP through the WALC case. I problematized the conceptualization of participation as a process that serves for social transformation since, because even when practised, it can also generate more significant exclusion of actors and accentuate power imbalances. The study contributed to the academic gap in the study on the effect that the various layers of understanding and narratives of participation have on power dynamics present in CAP, and its impact in how actors performed.

This research aimed to shed light on the different understandings, narratives and forms of participation presented by the actors involved in WALC, as well as their limitations and opportunities managing power imbalances. By studying the conceptualization of local participation in development, I examined the different perspectives of participation in CC and the intricate relationship it has with power dynamics based on water knowledge and technical expertise. The methods used were participatory action research, ethnography of policy translation and qualitative interviews, in which participation was understood as a transformative and sensitive process or as a tool for reputation improvement and power control. The above was evidenced through the findings.

Grassroot NGOs are the ones mediating and generating connections between local actors from La Ciénaga, and external actors. The findings indicated that La Ciénaga participants saw NGOs as intermediaries between the community and the WALC program rather than the mayor's office and the consortia. The relationships of trust at the local level and the knowledge of the needs of this population allowed the NGO to provide what the community requested from WaL: information of WaL, technical training on adaptation and risk, resources for transportation, and advocacy for their involvement.

Participation was understood differently by the participating actors, demonstrating that there is heterogeneity even between the actors presented as clusters, that is, the local and the external ones. Within the local actors, participation was understood as a process of co-creating solutions that contribute to improving livelihood conditions. It was also understood as a process for integrating actors to joint forces, and finally, it can work on what was built at the local level. Moreover, they shared a vision of the values of participation, such as solidarity and trust, and time, communication, and personalized of interactions between the consortium and each actor, as key strategies.

WaL and RVO understood participation as a dynamic tool that can be adjusted to invite local actors to participate according to the needs of each phase of the program. For the consortiums, it was a tool for integrating knowledge, receiving, and delivering information with local actors. These actors' commonalities were related to the limitations and complexities in its practice caused by time, budget and interests established by WaL to reach the goal. The logics behind these understandings were different. For local actors, the understanding was based on the diversity of individual and collective needs and interests around water presented in Cartagena. The finding demonstrated that the diversity and complexity of local needs and problems associated with livelihood conditions drive the narrative of co-sense the diversity in local contexts.

For RVO and WaL, the narrative was facilitation of knowledge; however, the finding showed that the logic behind the understanding of participation is still closely linked to expertise. The use of narrative to outsource the responsibility of participation through the role of intermediaries or consortia was evident. Additionally, this narrative evaluates the success of participation based on the number of actors who attend the events and denoted

the continuity of the top-down structures in the DWS. The finding demonstrated a complexity for reconciling the different visions and narratives of participation in a way that would involve and incorporate the interests of local and external actors.

The perception that WaL and RVO have of the local mayor and the political context factors for enabling or limiting the participation of local governments in WaL. Personal characteristics of the mayor, such as English proficiency, shared interests, and charisma, determined the relationships of trust and the level of involvement in WALA and WALC, representing an element that defines the power dynamics between government actors, impacting the translation of WaL to other countries.

To answer the research question, local participation has multiple forms, limitations, opportunities, and tensions when facing power imbalances. It was shown that participation is always complex and that horizontal conversations are not easy to achieve because the translation of programs like WaL depends on complex factors such as the heterogeneity of the participants, interests, needs, cultural diversity, antagonisms, language, charisma, international agenda, bankability, among others. The conjunction of all these elements means that participation always have a duality, excluding and including simultaneously.

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Appendices

Appendix 1:

Personal reflections on the role of researchers as interlocutors: ethical and political dilemmas.

Initially, I thought of integrating as part of the findings the observation made during a visit to the hotspot La Ciénaga de la Virgen, that I coordinated with the support of the local NGO to gather social leaders, RVO, the Water envoy and an official from the Dutch Ministry of Economy in the area. For this visit I served as an interlocutor between people who were participants in my research, with whom I developed trust and which I then tried to transfer between them to bring them, so they can talk about their visions of the program. My great motivation was to be able to use the contacts and trust I generated with the participants to support the creation of dialogue spaces for horizontal conversation between leaders of the Ciénaga and the actors who lead water policy at the international level. This meeting filled me with emotion due to the possibility of sitting them in an informal urban settlement in Cartagena. Two types of actors from distant realities, with different intersectionalities, and with diametrically opposite living conditions.

This meeting resulted in the possibility for these Dutch actors, seen as high-level bureaucrats, to humanize, empathize, show solidarity, and take responsibility of WACL actions with some of La Ciénaga citizens. During the visit, I observed these actors going through various emotions, from surprise, sorrow, joy, to shame, based on what they could see and hear from the leaders of Olaya Herrera regarding their expectations of WALC to be inclusive. We sailed by canoe, and at the end of the visit of more than four hours, they left La Ciénaga with the privilege and responsibility of being able to know names, faces and voices to the participants about whom they talked so much from their desks in The Hague. The next day of the visit, the new Water Envoy made her first appearance at WALC, and managed to connect and be applauded by the workshop attendees for the fact that she was able to incorporate local words, needs and opinions heard in La Ciénaga de day before in her speech, which she mentioned as a unique opportunity to understand the context of the city. The visit was not plan of WaL program, was an informal collective effort.

This whole experience initially led me to think about the findings around this interaction that I managed and the idea of the "transfer of trust" between my participants as a decision I made to make this research not a simple document but one that could positively impact the lives of those who were part of it. However, after much reflection, I managed to understand that this was not my discovery; my finding was that the actors were not speaking to each other and that this was just an exceptional event due to the coincidence that, as a Cartagena, I was doing a master's in development in the Netherlands, in The Hague, on participation processes in climate adaptation. At the same time, WaL was being developed in Cartagena. If not for this coincidence, those Dutch actors and the Olaya leaders would never have sat down to talk about justice, inclusion and participation on the land filled with mud by that community in vulnerable conditions at the swamp's edge.

I write this reflection to emphasize that horizontal conversations are challenging without empathy, humanity, trust, and time. The travel and translation of programs cannot be done only on paper; it requires the physical mobilization of actors in conditions of power to the places where disasters occur. On the other hand, as researchers, we also have the power to advocate for social justice through our investigative process, but always acknowledging the duality and ethical risks that it can represent for the participants involved and the researchers

themselves. From this experience, I can say that as researchers, we are political actors and that objectivity and subjectivity are separated by a thin thread, Mosse (2006:938) argument describes my feeling, "a personal analytical story; an ethnography in which I myself was a key informant.". Thus, to avoid biases it was essential to receive feedback from my supervisors, friends, and colleagues to avoid conscientious objections, so I could tell the story that I saw and which I presented in this document as findings.

Finally, I can say that these actors dialogued and managed to connect in ways that WALC had not yet achieved; from this experience, I want to rescue the power we have as interlocutors between actors and, in turn, the dilemmas and costs that this dialogue may have for the research, the participants and the researcher. I did it to contribute to what the communities mentioned during the interviews, "We want to be seen, heard, that they come here," but it also meant probable ethical risks that I tried to avoid, and that was assuming, since I am a Cartagena interested in making WALC work, but also an independent and neutral researcher. I kept this on mind always, and that is why, after the investigation, I distanced myself from the Dutch government participants and local actors to be able to analyze the information without bias.

Appendix 2.

Informed consent interview:

International Institute of Social Studies (ISS)

MA in development studies

Research Paper: Local participation in the design of Water Climate Adaptation programs: Understanding the role of participation regarding power dynamics in international cooperation programs, the case of the "Water as Leverage Cartagena program".

Student: Laura Mercedes Caicedo Valencia

Informed consent interview

Place: _____ **Date:** _____ **Time:** _____

This research aims to understand how different stakeholders, particularly vulnerable people at risk of floods, understand and practice participation in the design of climate adaptation programs when they involve multiple stakeholders and are generated in contexts of power. As such, this research is part of the MA in Development Studies at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) of the University of Rotterdam in the Netherlands.

For this research I will conduct semi-structured interviews, observations in the workshops of "Construyendo con el Agua Cartagena" (Water as Leverage Cartagena), and two participatory workshops with people from the Community Unit of Government #6 of Cartagena, located in the Ciénaga de la Virgen. The information collected will be used for academic purposes only and the results will be published and shared with the participants at the end of the research with the objective of contributing to the sustainability of this type of project by understanding the dynamics of local participation in international cooperation projects.

At the end of the research, I expect to produce a personal podcast program with a summary of the findings and life experiences around participation, climate change, flooding, and vulnerability to be shared with the Cartagenos, and to achieve this, your participation will be valuable. Therefore, once the results are published in November 2023, I will contact you to explain and design together the podcast episode and the experiences we will share about this process.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be included in the interview transcripts and analysis only if you allow it, otherwise, your name will be kept outside of the research.

Voluntary Participation:

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, or if you decide to withdraw at any time, this will not cause you any harm.

If you have any questions after participating in the interview, you can contact me at +31645826707 through WhatsApp or to my supervisor, Dr. Rodrigo Mena +31 6 47445221.

Would you like to participate in the interview? Yes _____ No _____

Would you like to participate in the podcast (radio type audios) Yes _____ No _____

Do you consent to audio recording in this session? Yes _____ No _____

Do you consent to be quoted (mentioned) in the research? Yes _____ No _____

If yes, do you prefer your name or an alias to be used?

Name: _____

Alias: _____

Participant's signature: _____

I, Laura Mercedes Caicedo Valencia, student of the MA in Development Studies at the Institute of Social Studies, certify that this information will only be used for academic purposes and that the results of this research will be socialized once completed.

Student's signature

Appendix 3

Context assessment

Context assessment			
Country and Region Profile	Cartagena, Colombia. Coastal, Caribbean city, high levels of insecurity, floods due to intensive rain, and rising in the sea levels, however, during july Cartagena will face a dry season with "El fenómeno del niño" with high temperatures with sensation of 40 degrees.		
Actors	Local government (Sustainability and International Cooperation offices)	They can perceived me as an allie or antagonist, that will depend on my behaviour, I need to be carefull during to ensure my interviews after the workshop sessions. Their main interest is political and that requires to "show" progress, and that doesn't mean directly ensure "public participation", but prioritize WaL and NL as a powerfull actor that is leading the program.	Perception analysis
	Local NGO: Fundación Grupo Social	It is a CSR that will be implementing the WaL programs with the Ciénaga de la Virgen Community. They can perceived me as an allie to understand the communities needs, constrains and enables to participate in the process.	
	Public participation from people at risk of floods from Ciénaga de la Virgen among others areas.	"Powerless" player, they can perceived me as an outsider/insider that maybe can help then or maybe is part of WaL (having influence for something). They have many interest, however the idea is to find out that with the research.	
	Water as Leverage team. Netherlands.	Major player, they can pereceived me as a researcher that can be an "ally" to have insights about social inclusion in the Water Sector and Nature Based solutions for Water Governance and Flood Risk Management. Their interest is continuing to have this Aid/Trade programs around the world with the "expertise" narrative, so the image is important for them.	
Processes / Events	There will be different cultural events in july in Cartagena: Sail Colombia, Book fair, and is one of the highest touristic seasons of the year, it will be crowd. Additionally, the project 'Restoration of the Degraded Ecosystems of the Canal del Dique' was signed so the pre-feasibility project will start. The country is getting ready for local elections in November, so there is a lot tension and political stress in the city.		
Case specific information	WaL will organize two workshops in the city, the next ones will be in september.		

Appendix 4

Risk analysis

Risk analysis					
Threat	# Likelihood (1 to 5)	# Impact	Actions to Reduce Likelihood	Actions to Reduce Impact	Final level of risk
Floods	2.5	5	Checking the weather and season in Cartagena, consulting also with the key actors what places are safer in terms of floods if the rain starts	Know beforehand the mitigation plan and follow local leaders and NGO instructions. But for the moment this is the plan: 1. Assess the perimeter before doing something, is it safe to do something? Is secure? 2. Assess situation: act and collect the information, understand what is happening. 3. Call for assistance. 4. ACT: Run or hide? Evacuation? 5. Safe room / hiding place? 6. Gather information. 7. Identify close by safe refuges.	4
Robberies and possible stab wounds	3	5	Understanding who and why will do something to you in that area, engage with local powers, and avoid routine. Having key actors as allies to support me and go with me to risky areas is important, and tell them where and when I will be doing the fieldwork. Being transparent with my interest, try not to attract the attention with clothes, technological devices or accessories.	Keep my hands visible, and cooperate by give the stuff that they ask for and avoid any confrontation.	4
Harassment	3	4	Set ground rules from the beginning, having semi formal relationships so there is clear that there are boundaries. Not stay 100% alone in close areas, always inform where I am.	1. Assess the perimeter before doing something, is it safe to do something? Is secure? 2. Assess situation: act and collect the information, understand what is happening. 3. Call for assistance. 4. ACT: Run or hide? Evacuation? 5. Safe room / hiding place? 6. Gather information. 7. Identify close by safe refuges.	3
Transportation issues	3	4	Having a trustworthy person that transport me and know the area	Call for support to the NGO or key local actors	4
Frustration or manipulative aggression during the sessions	3	3	Use the techniques learned in the Safety and security course to avoid harm but also to put boundaries during the session. Being clear with what I can offer and what I cannot.	Use the techniques learned in the Safety and security course to avoid harm but also to put boundaries during the session. Being clear with what I can offer and what I cannot.	4

Appendix 5

Life in La Ciénaga de La Virgen



Appendix 6

Water as Leverage Cartagena Local Design Workshops



Appendix 7:

Participatory workshop structure

Workshop 1: timeline	
Elements	Description
Objective	Conduct a chronological and correlational analysis of the changes and needs generated by Hurricane IOTA, as well as understand the current interests of those affected by WaL: how did it affect the livelihoods of the inhabitants of the neighborhood, what were the milestones at the time of the disaster, the response of the local government and the community, what has happened since what are the major needs and how does that translate into their participation in Wal? In a community there are different interests, each one has its own particular problem and ideas of where to direct resources. Are there contradictions? Is there a common plan for what they want? Are there positions or interests?
Workshop question	What happened before, during and after Hurricane IOTA? Personally, occupationally, mentally
How will the space where the session will be held be organized?	Space with chairs to be placed in a circle.
Required materials	A long ribbon, post its, and markers.
Icebreaker	Question ball: In the game, the participants sit in a circle and pass the ball around until the facilitator says STOP. The participant who keeps the ball must introduce him/herself and tell three curious facts about him/herself. If a participant's turn is repeated, the other members have the opportunity to ask him/her a question.
Workshop description	1. The workshop question will be read: What happened six months before, during, and after (up to the present) Hurricane IOTA? Personally, at work, and mentally. 2. A line will be drawn on the floor and participants will be given notes and markers so that they can individually write their experiences and place them on the floor. 3. Once the timeline is finished, we will reflect on the findings: similarities, interesting themes, concerns, interests, and changes.
Harvesting	We will ask the workshop question: What are the results you want to see from this project in your life? in relation to the timeline exercise. Then they will discuss among themselves why the results, what is more important than the other, and why.

Appendix 8

Semi-structure interview guideline

E.g.

Type of stakeholder and role	Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO): Government agency which is part of the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy. WaL is a program from RVO related to Water Climate Adaptation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Robert is the Director of Water as Leverage.
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal introduction of the researcher and the research participant, and interest in the research. • Reading of the informed consent, review of ethical considerations and risks by the research participant and researchers, then start of the recording.
Personal background	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How would you define “participation” and “social inclusion” within the context of Water Climate Adaptation programs? 2. What are the challenges or obstacles you have encountered when attempting to integrate participatory methodologies to ensure social inclusion into WaL program design? 3. What and how WaL evaluates participation and social inclusion in their programs and how it is integrated to local government mechanisms? 4. In your experience, what are the roles that local stakeholders play in promoting and enabling participation and collaboration in programs like WaL? 5. What are the main lessons from the last workshops done in Cartagena?
Dimension 1 Participation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. In WaL Semarang one of the lessons was the lack of formal links between the local and national governments in the initial phases of the project, in that sense how has the process been with the national government of Colombia? 7. What are the main challenges and opportunities in the relation between Colombia’s governments (National and local) and the gov of the Netherlands in WaL? 8. What do you think are the main constrains and enablers that locals’ actors face, particularly vulnerable communities, to participation in WaL and what is the program doing to improve that? 9. In a participatory program full of heterogeneous actors such as WaL, what is the methodology used by WaL to generate the commitment and continuity of the key local actors in these programs?
Dimension 2 Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 10. How is the communication between governments for decision making in terms of consortium selection, organization of workshops, information dissemination, etc.? 11. In the interviews I identified that, for the locals, meaningful participation and conversations depends on three connected variables: 1. to having more presence of WaL consortiums in the affected territories (Hotspots), 2. Having more time to understand the proposals and their implications, 3. Having clear roles and responsibilities beyond the workshops. What do you think about this?
Dimension 3 Authority/power	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. What strategies or mechanisms are in place to ensure that vulnerable communities have a meaningful role in shaping the design of WaL, especially in terms of decision-making? 13. What are the costs and benefits for the dutch government and private sector to implement programs like WaL in countries like Colombia? 14. One of the main lessons from WaL Semarang was that there wasn’t an institutionalization of the resilience design approach in local norms. What are the strategies that RVO/ WaL are implementing with the local government to improve institutional capacity to ensure the implementation of the program?
Closing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have any question or additional comment? • Your experiences will help me to identify best practices, challenges, and areas for improvement in creating more inclusive and effective initiatives in FRR and Climate Adaptation programs. Thank you for your time.