

## HOW DOES NEGATIVITY TOWARDS WORKSHOPS AFFECT CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION PARTNERSHIPS? THE CASE OF WORKSHOP FATIGUE

Although workshop fatigue constrains honest discussions, anticipating fatigue could be an accessible way to talk about hierarchy in inherently unequal international partnerships.

### WHAT WAS DONE, AND WHAT WAS NOVEL?

'Workshop fatigue' is a colloquialism used to describe apathy and cynicism towards facilitated discussions. Ordinarily project leaders accept that influential stakeholders will be difficult to get hold of because they are inundated with requests to participate in facilitated dialogues. It is also commonly assumed that interventions aimed to bring about change, will inevitably come with the issue of workshop fatigue.

Instead, I see what is commonly referred to as 'workshop fatigue' as an important indicator of resistance that should not be ignored. This is especially so in climate change adaptation projects that seek to build international partnerships with regions that have long been targeted to participate in development interventions funded by governments in the global North.

This paper concludes that although workshop fatigue constrains honest discussions, anticipating fatigue could be an accessible way to talk about hierarchy in inherently unequal international partnerships. Hence resistance provides an opportunity to navigate power relations.

### KEY FINDINGS

To challenge presumptions that fatigue is an inevitable side-effect of interventions that bring about change, this paper proposes that workshop fatigue is a form of resistance to power relations. Throughout the process of Transformative Scenario Planning (TSP), I found that pockets of resistance towards experimenting with this new method affected interactions between facilitators, project teams and stakeholders.

Even though TSP was intended to be a process, the suppression of skepticism reduced the intervention to a series of workshops. Despite facilitation being designed to foster openness, a reluctance to be honest meant that at times several team members and stakeholders were merely going through the motions. By doing so, individuals thwarted the ability of people perceived to be superior outsiders to impose their will on project teams and stakeholders.

### KEY IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

While project teams are under pressure to produce results and meet the expectations of funders, projects which hope to trigger change are dependent on the active participation of local stakeholders. There is no guarantee that project teams or stakeholders will share the interest that funders have for experimental approaches towards climate change adaptation.

When funding is conditional on specific activities being completed, it can undermine efforts to foster a sense that project participants are equal partners in international collaborations. Agreeing to attend, and then not arriving, or arriving late and leaving early, can be subtle ways of avoiding being dictated to.

Researchers, project teams, and funders should recognise fatigue as a manifestation of discontent, and a challenge to typical hierarchical power relations. Workshop fatigue should therefore be anticipated in order to acknowledge the feelings of people in places that have been dominated by the logic of western science.



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