IWRM TOOL - C6

Dialogue

Dialogue is a specific form of two-way communication based on respectful and ethical discussion together with rhetorical and sensitive expression of ideas, which distinguish it from other ways of communication. Good dialogue following a number of principles and strategies can enhance IWRM implementation. This sub-section contains Tools that detail the principles, strategies, and key considerations in relation to negotiation, facilitation and mediation, conflict management, and water diplomacy.

Defining Dialogue and its Specificities

Dialogue is a highly specific form of responsive two-way communication, which builds upon an orientation characterised by positive attitudes of the participants towards each other (Lane & Kent, 2018). In a dialogue, participants come together in a safe space in order to grasp each other's viewpoint and develop new options to address a common problem (Pruitt & Thomas, 2007). Dialogue is "a conversation with center, not sides" visualising the process of channeling parties' differences toward "something that has never been created before" (Isaacs, 1999, 33).

Respectful and ethical discussion as well as rhetorical and sensitive expression of ideas distinguish dialogue from other types of two-way communication (Lane & Kent, 2018). Dialogue is contrasted with discussion which is considered an informal and unstructured social conversation without intention to achieve certain outcomes (Organising Engagement, 2022). In a discussion, people see themselves as separate from each other (Isaacs, 1999). Dialogue is different from a debate where opposing sides defend their positions considering only one right answer or perspective staying evaluative and critical towards other viewpoints (Brouwer et al., 2015). Dialogue is not a substitute for various conflict resolution techniques, such as negotiation and mediation (Tool C6.01; Tool C6.02), as its aim is to create a changed relationship, not to reach a concrete agreement. Dialogue and deliberation are different processes with the latter focusing on careful consideration of options required to make tough decisions and the former being the basis for the latter to happen. Both are complementary steps in a bigger decision-making process (Pruitt & Thomas, 2007).

Dialogue can be put at one end of the public relations continuum, with propaganda or monologue placed at the other (Figure 1). Propaganda is a one-way communication model, or a two-way asymmetrical model with messages constructed to generate adherence. In turn, dialogic public relations seek truth and mutual understanding (Kent, 2017).
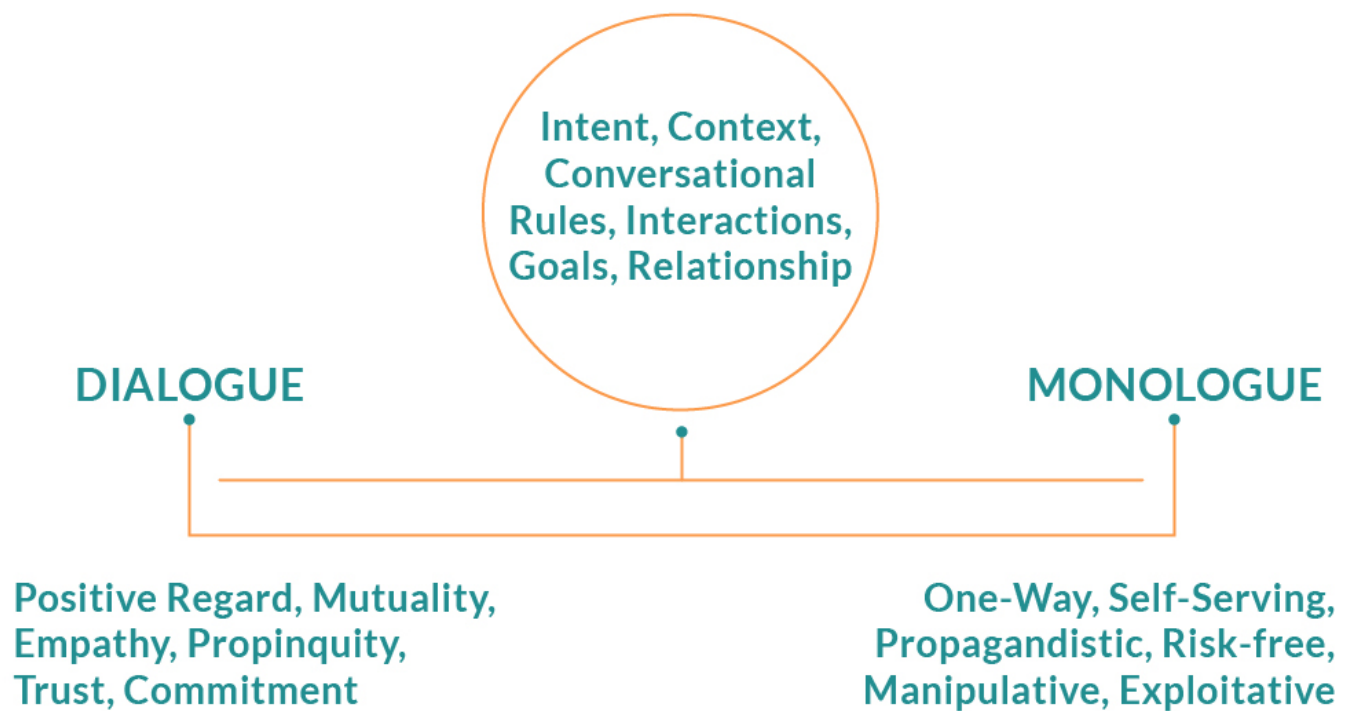
Figure 1. Dialogic Continuum (Adapted from Kent, 2017).

Dialogue as Contributor to IWRM

Good dialogue and communication strategies can enhance IWRM and improve chances of creating a water secure future in alignment with global sustainable development. The crucial role of dialogue is reflected in the following scenarios related to water management:

- Intersectoral challenges can be addressed with the help of the assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystem nexus facilitated by a dialogic approach (UNECE, 2021) (Tool C1.10).
- Dialogue can help implement a bottom-up approach in response to insufficient cooperation of WASH and WRM actors, specifically inadequate citizen engagement (Gai & Jeths, 2018).
- Communities access to WASH services in the Global South can channel their ideas on solutions to infrastructural development via dialogue (Butterworth et al., 2007) (Tool B2.03).
- Communities of practice (Tool B4.03) may use dialogue as a mechanism seeking to build legitimacy ensuring the right to use and influence the state of a common property resource (van Wyk et al., 2009).
- Dialogue can serve as an instrument to secure adequate financing of the water sector by improving donor-recipient specific two-way communication (Agarwal et al., 2000) (Tools D2).
- Within transboundary issues, water provides one of the few paths for dialogue to avoid bilateral conflicts (Wolf et al., 2005) (Tool C6.04).
- Dialogue is the basis of transboundary cooperation initiatives aimed at developing a common understanding of a river basin via knowledge sharing (Tool B4.01),

collaborative planning (Tools A3) and promoting collective action (Tool B3.05) (Nile Basin Initiative, 2015).

Principles and Strategies of Dialogue

For an effective dialogue to happen, the following explicit and implicit assumptions underlying the concept of dialogue should be in place (Kent & Taylor, 2002) (Figure 2):

- **Mutuality**: Acknowledging that parties are tied together, which is characterised by collaboration and spirit of mutual equality.
- **Propinquity**: Establishing orientation to a relationship by immediacy of presence (communicating in the present), temporal flow (focus on a shared future), engagement (accessibility, presentness, and willingness to interact).
- **Empathy**: Creating the atmosphere of support and trust acknowledging the voice of the other.
- **Risk**: Characterised by vulnerability, unanticipated consequences, and recognition of otherness.

- **Commitment**: Describes characteristics of a dialogue, including genuineness, commitment to both conversation and interpretation.
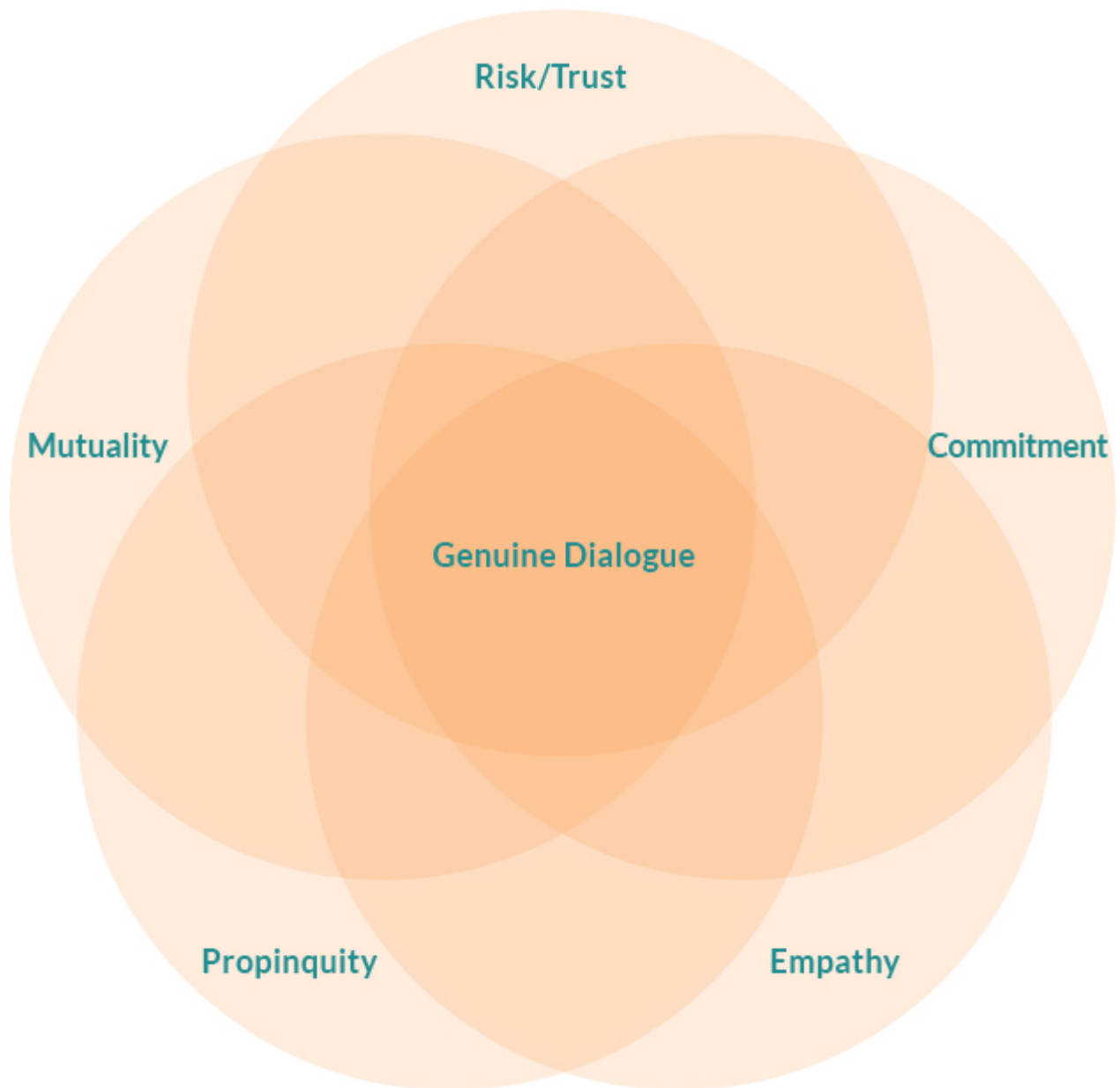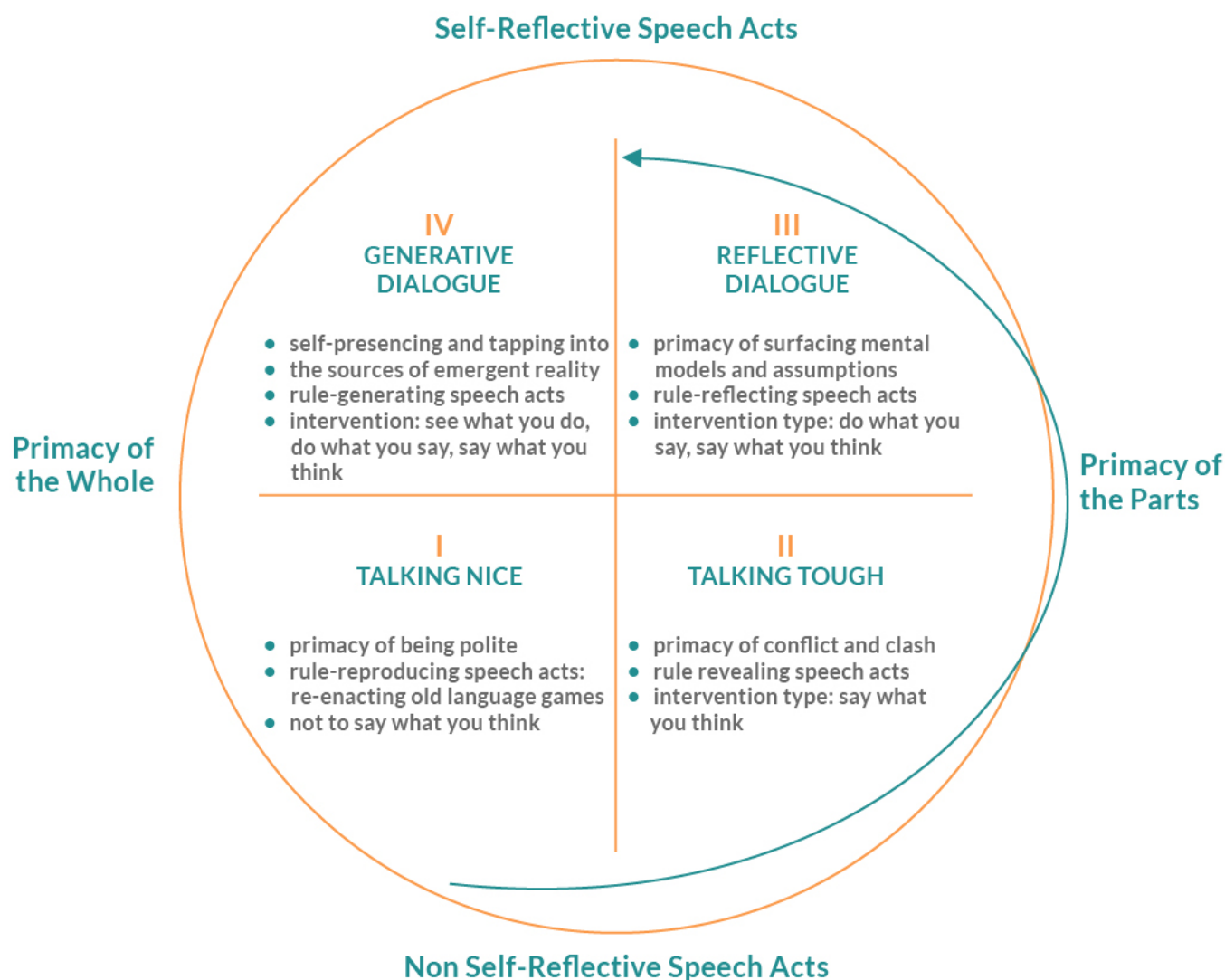
Figure 2. Dialogic Model (Adapted from Kent, 2017)

The following strategies can be employed to support an effective two-way dialogue built on these principles (Organising Engagement, 2022):

- Providing an intentional structure with rules and group agreements;
- Sharing essential information and context (Tool B4.01);
- Designing for inclusivity and safety;
- Ensuring equity of voice, participation, and power (Tools B5);
- Providing skilled facilitation (Tool C6.02);
- Listening intentionally to understand, respecting, suspending, and voicing to build capacity for new behaviour (Isaacs, 1999);
- Using open-ended questions;
- Co-creating agendas and solutions;
- Reflecting on the process and outcomes.

Types of Dialogue

Dialogue is not usually perceived as a series of steps and is rather a product of ongoing communication and relationships (Kent & Taylor, 2002). However, different types of dialogue can be part of fields of conversation model (Figure 3), which has several consecutive transformative stages demonstrating that dialogue is "conversation in motion" (Isaacs, 1999, 247).

Self-Reflective Speech Acts

IV
GENERATIVE DIALOGUE

- self-presencing and tapping into
- the sources of emergent reality
- rule-generating speech acts
- intervention: see what you do, do what you say, say what you think

III
REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE

- primacy of surfacing mental models and assumptions
- rule-reflecting speech acts
- intervention type: do what you say, say what you think

Primacy of the Whole

Primacy of the Parts

I
TALKING NICE

- primacy of being polite
- rule-reproducing speech acts: re-enacting old language games
- not to say what you think

II
TALKING TOUGH

- primacy of conflict and clash
- rule revealing speech acts
- intervention type: say what you think

Non Self-Reflective Speech Acts

Figure 4. Fields of conversation (Adapted from Otto, 2001).

Reflective dialogue is based on reconnecting what we think and say with what we do having parallels with double loop learning (Tool B4.02). This type of dialogue explores underlying causes, rules, and assumptions to get to the deeper questions. The main factor of moving from reflective to generative dialogue is based on reconnecting what we think, say, and do with what we see. Generative dialogue creates unprecedented opportunities and new insights, producing a collective flow (Otto Scharmer, 2001; Brouwer et al., 2015).

Sub-Section Overview

Dialogue is an essential instrument in the process of implementing IWRM principles. It provides a platform to reconcile the needs of upstream and downstream users as well as to integrate various sectoral views and interests (Agarwal et al., 2000). This sub-section contains four inter-connected Tools that form the basis for dialogic approach within IWRM:

- **Negotiation (Tool C6.01)**: Defines the criteria for successful negotiation, details the benefits from adopting an interest-based negotiation approach, discusses pre-negotiation preparations, and introduces the mutual gains approach.
- **Mediation and Facilitation (Tool C6.02)**: Discusses the differences between facilitation and mediation, highlights why a neutral third party is essential in the context of water disputes, provides key considerations for selecting an adequate third party, describes how to adapt the mediation process design to the nature of a conflict, and underscores mediation techniques that can help parties reach mutually acceptable agreements.
- **Conflict Management (Tool C6.03)**: Introduces the core principles of conflict management, details two key frameworks for analysing a conflict, including the Circle of Conflict and the Onion Model, and describes the main conflict management approaches.

- **Water Diplomacy (Tool C6.04)**: Explains the several tracks that can be used in water diplomacy (Track 1, Track 1.5, Track 2 and Track 3) and introduces regional and basin dialogue pathways for water diplomacy.

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