Environmental Science & Policy 58 (2016) 16–28

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Environmental Science & Policy

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/envsci

Policy coherence in climate governance in Caribbean Small Island Developing States

Michelle Scobie

The Institute of International Relations & The Sir Arthur Lewis Institute for Social and Economic Studies, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 10 June 2015
Accepted 17 December 2015
Available online 12 January 2016

Keywords:
Climate change
Policy coherence
SIDS
Developing states
Environmental governance

ABSTRACT

Climate governance in Small Island developing States (SIDS) is a pressing priority to preserve livelihoods, biodiversity and ecosystems for the next generations. Understanding the dynamics of climate change policy integration is becoming more crucial as we try to measure the success of environmental governance efforts and chart new goals for sustainable development. At the international level, climate change policy has evolved from single issue to integrated approaches towards achieving sustainable development. New actors, new mechanisms and institutions of governance with greater fragmentation in governance across sectors and levels (Biermann and Pattberg, 2008) make integration of policy in the area of climate change governance even more of a challenge today. What is the Caribbean reality regarding policy coherence in climate change governance? Are the same climate change policy coherence frameworks useful or indeed applicable for environmental governance in developing states more generally and for SIDS in particular? What are the best triggers to achieve successful climate change policy integration in environmental governance—especially as the complex interconnectivity of new actors, institutions and mechanisms make the process of integration even more challenging? What facilitates and what hampers climate policy integration in the regional Caribbean context? This article reviews the debates around policy coherence for climate change governance, creates a framework to test or measure policy coherence and examines how relevant this has been to regional climate change governance processes in Commonwealth Caribbean States. The study found that though at the regional level, there is substantial recognition of the importance of and mechanics involved in climate policy coherence, this has not translated to policy coherence at the regional and national levels. There is a large degree of fragmentation in the application of climate policy in each Caribbean Island with no mechanism to breach the gap. Silos in public environmental governance architectures, unwillingness to share data, insufficient political will; unsustainable project-based funding and lack of accountability among actors are the main challenges to climate policy coherence. The findings fill a gap in the literature on the elements of climate policy coherence from a SIDS perspective.

1. Introduction

Climate change governance in Small Island developing States (SIDS) is a pressing priority to preserve livelihoods, biodiversity and ecosystems for the next generations. Global and regional targets, new actors, new mechanisms and institutions of governance with greater fragmentation in governance across sectors and levels (Biermann and Pattberg, 2008) make integration of policy in the area of climate change governance even more of a challenge today. The nature of policy coherence in climate change governance for SIDS is an area that has not yet been explored in the literature but is important as the global climate community tries optimise outcomes from limited climate adaptation funding. Is adaptation policy optimised in Caribbean SIDS? What works and what limits climate policy integration in the regional Caribbean context? This paper first reviewed the debates around policy coherence for climate change governance, created a framework to test or measure policy coherence and through an analysis of regional and national policy documents and interviews with experts, examined the extent to which policy coherence has been used climate change governance processes in Commonwealth Caribbean States. The study found that although at the regional level, there is substantial recognition of the importance of and mechanics involved in climate policy coherence, this has not translated to policy coherence outcomes at the

E-mail address: scobiemichelle@gmail.com (M. Scobie).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.envsci.2015.12.008
1462-9011/

regional and national levels. There is a large degree of fragmentation in the application of climate policy across scales and sectors in each Caribbean Island with no mechanism to breach the gap. The results showed that silos in public environmental governance architectures, unwillingness to share data, insufficient political will; unsustainable project-based funding and lack of accountability among actors are the main challenges to climate policy coherence. The findings fill a gap in the literature on the elements of climate policy coherence from a SIDS perspective and are important as donors that partner with the region for adaptation and mitigation to climate change seek to improve the quality of climate governance in SIDS.

1.1. Policy coherence and policy integration-the indicators

Policy coherence is an important pillar of good governance and as a concept is both a normative value and a process of governing (Jordan and Lenschow, 2010). For the purposes of this paper, policy coherence as a goal and policy integration as a process will be used interchangeably as factors in good climate governance. Policy coherence in governance is especially necessary for sustainable development (Kardos, 2012), but is difficult to put into practice and often finds more resonance in political discourse than in actual outcomes (Jordan and Lenschow, 2010). Developing states' policy makers have the difficult task to balance short term domestic priorities with long term development goals and drawing on best practices in policy integration is useful. Policy integration favours the efficient use of resources, it fosters synergies, builds on complementarities between different policy initiatives, reduces overlaps and integrates sectorial objectives (Lafferty and Hovden, 2003) in processes that require the consistent involvement of both private and public actors at all stages from policy conception to implementation and monitoring (Brodhag and Taliere, 2006).

Environmental policy integration's (EPI) specific content or normative meanings is situational and to some extent still indeterminate (Adelle and Russel, 2013). EPI includes a range of strategies that is not systematically classified in the literature, but include organisation, instructional, regulatory and financial interventions by the state as well as by the private sector (largely through corporate social responsibility) (Runhaar and Lafferty, 2008). EPI incorporates environmental policy into all levels of policy making – from international (Nilsson et al., 2012) to local (Von Homeyer et al., 2009) – in a way that avoids conflicts with other policy goals while promoting environmental protection (Runhaar et al., 2014).

Climate policy integration is conceptually linked to wider environmental policy integration and has evolved from single issue to integrated approaches towards achieving sustainable development. It requires governance across scales where policies have potential synergies or conflict (Nilsson et al., 2012). Policy integration is a concept (approached from theoretical or analytical perspective), a mode and process of governing, and a desired policy outcome or output of governance. New actors, new mechanisms and institutions of governance with greater fragmentation in governance across sectors and levels make integration of policy in the area of climate change governance even more of a challenge. In climate policy integration, policy coherence is less about integration of climate environmental efforts into general policy and more about how to engage a narrow range of sectors to specifically address climate change goals (Adelle and Russel, 2013). Understanding the dynamics of climate policy integration is becoming more crucial as we try to measure the success of environmental governance efforts and chart new goals for sustainable development. More research is needed to understand what strategies work where and why (Runhaar et al., 2014).

1.2. SIDS and climate policy

Climate policy integration is important for SIDS that are heavily affected by and depend upon environment. The poorest SIDS are the most vulnerable to climate impacts and have the least resources for adaptation strategies but SIDS's vulnerability to climatic events predates climate change (Table 1). Hurricanes, tropical cyclones, drought and disease annually devastate key sectors that for SIDS include tourism, fisheries, agriculture, health etc. Climate change adds to the challenge of island development, to environmental insecurity (Dryzek and Stevenson, 2011) and raises questions of climate justice as SIDS must find ways to address the domestic consequences of an international problem that they played no part in creating. The need for adaptation increases the development challenge as countries struggle to manage and adapt to new risks while managing traditional disaster risk reduction processes and promoting national and community based development.

According to the IPCC Fifth Assessment Report, climate change has three main areas of impact for SIDS: coastal systems, terrestrial systems and human systems. There is a high to very high degree of confidence that environmental and human systems are being impacted upon by climate change; The Report has a very high degree of confidence that sea level will rise; that there will be general environmental degradation and loss of habitat in urban locations; that there will be more casualties and damage during extreme events; that there will be more coral bleaching, an incremental degradation of ground water quality; increased shoreline erosion and degraded coastal fisheries. There is a medium to high degree of confidence that there will be altitudinal species shift, saline incursions degrading ecosystems, acidification of surface waters, and increased human susceptibility to climate induced diseases. The 2014 IPCC report documents already existing impacts on coasts and marine biophysical systems, on terrestrial systems and water resources, on human settlements, tourism, health and economies.

Adaptation is an important part of policy response in environmental governance for SIDS as climate change is projected to cause more intense extreme events and less favourable conditions for main sectors such as tourism and agriculture. Temperatures may rise by as much as 1.4 °C. Rainfall is projected to decrease by 5 or 6% in much of the Caribbean by 2100—which will negatively affect agriculture and water availability. Public health impacts are a significant cause for concern as some vector, food and water borne diseases can be exacerbated by climate change. In recent times, climate change led to extreme drought in Jamaica, to flooding in Guyana in 2005 and Belize in 2010 and the recent increase incidence of dengue in Trinidad and Tobago was attributed to increased rainfall caused by climate change (Barros et al., 2014; Nurse et al., 2014). Much of Guyana's built areas are below the sea level and rising sea levels threaten its sea walls that separate its capital from the Atlantic Ocean. This existential risk is not matched by the resources to rebuild sea walls or move entire populations inland.

Adaptation, defined as the process of adjustment to actual or expected climate and its effects, is, according to the IPCC the only effective way to manage climate change when mitigation measures cannot reduce impacts. Adaptation policy has 10 broad areas of focus: development, poverty alleviation, livelihood security, disaster risk management, ecosystem management, spatial or land use planning, structural/physical actions (including engineered, technological, ecosystem based options and services), institutional actions, social actions (changing behaviour, informational and educational options), and other broad spheres for change (practical, political and personal adaptation strategies) (Nurse et al., 2014; Barros et al., 2014).