Policy changes resulting in power changes? Quantitative evidence from 25 years of forest policy development in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

A remarkable research program exists conceptualizing *policy change* as dependent variable, and inquiring on factors causing it. A question so far neglected by political science is: to which extent does policy change as independent variable also lead to power changes among key policy actors so they can facilitate and flank those changes? Before this background this study aims to analyze the consequences of 25 years of policy changes on the power of the main bureaucratic actors in a particular policy field. Conceptually we draw on bureaucratic politics, power and relative gains theories and the concept of substantial vs. symbolic policy change. Empirically we focus on all substantive as well as symbolic policy changes within the forest policy sector in Bangladesh between 1989 and 2014. Our finding suggest that over 25 years both, substantive *as well as* symbolic policy changes bring about power gains for (i) *subject-specific sectoral administrations*, including multi-sectoral district authorities, who gain power to the largest extent, (ii) *cross-cutting general bureaucracies* on finance and planning, and (iii) *foreign donor administrations*. We conclude that esp. sectoral bureaucracies are very sensitive and knowledgeable about the power implications of policy changes specific to *their* fields of expertise and, hence, are able to follow a more efficient power strategy than their cross-cutting counterparts.

1. Introduction

Over the past decades a remarkable research program evolved on the broad question of policy change (Kingdon, 1984; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999; Sabatier, 1988; Giessen, 2011; Murray, 2013; Tosun, 2013; Lemieux et al., 2014; Humpage, 2014). In this program policy change was conceptualized as the main explanandum (Knill et al., 2010), with a large number of independent variables influencing it (for a review see Giessen, 2011; in greater detail e.g. Öberg et al., 2015; Fischer, 2014; Ingold, 2011; Sabatier, 1987; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). One of the key conclusions one might draw from that program is that, in order to change public policy against the very common resistance of opposing actors and sticky institutions, political power of change agents and their coalitions is a crucial mega-factor. The subsequent question of which key actors benefit from policy changes has largely been neglected. In particular, the question regarding the extent to which policy changes also lead to power changes among key public bureaucracies delivering policy changes in a specific policy field, so far was not addressed by political science. This query conceptualizes policy change as independent variable, potentially causing power changes amongst the relevant bureaucracies in the policy domain. Following bureaucratic politics theory, these bureaucracies, however, compete with each other for state budgets, staff, political responsibility, and policy tasks (Niskanen, 1971; Krott, 1990; Peters, 2010; Giessen et al., 2014; Giessen et al., 2016; Rahman et al., 2016b). Hence, the empirical power distribution amongst the competing administrative units is a relevant and timely question increasingly addressed in policy studies (e.g., Maryudi, 2011; Ahlborg and Nightingale, 2012; Schusser, 2013; Wibowo and Giessen, 2015; Rahman and Giessen, 2017a). This not only is interesting from a scholarly perspective, but also practically, because a certain power capabilities are necessary requirements if a changed policy is supposed to actually be implemented. Before this background this study aims to analyze the consequences of 25 years of policy changes on the power of the main bureaucratic actors in a particular policy field. The study employs the forest policy sector of Bangladesh as a case to investigate on this question.

Nomenclature		FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
		FD	Finance Division
Acronyms		IC	Incentives
		IMED	Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division
ADB	Asian Development Bank	IPAC	Integrated Protected Area Co-Management
APP	Analytical Policy Program	LGED	Local Government Engineering Department
BCCT	Bangladesh Climate Change Trust	MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
BCCRF	Bangladesh Climate Change Resilience Fund	MoC	Ministry of Commerce
BCCTF	Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund	MoEF	Ministry of Environment & Forests
BCS	Bangladesh Civil Service	MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
BFD	Bangladesh Forest Department	MoFL	Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock
BFRI	Bangladesh Forest Research Institute	MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
BGD	Border Guard of Bangladesh	MoPA	Ministry of Public Administration
BNH	Bangladesh National Herbarium	NGOs	Non-governmental Organizations
CR	Coercion	PC	Planning Commission
CREL	Climate Resilient Ecosystem and Livelihoods	REDD	Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Degradation
DAE	Department of Agricultural Extension	UNDP	United Nations Development Program
DI	Dominant information	UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
DoE	Department of Environment	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
DoF	Department of Fisheries	WB	World Bank
ERD	Economic Relations Division		

2. State of the art and justification of the study

In policy studies, scholars have analyzed the factors hindering or supporting policy changes, emphasizing policy formation (Öberg et al., 2015), the coalitions of actors and network structures that influence policy changes (Fischer, 2014; Ingold, 2011; Sabatier, 1987Markard et al., 2016; Henry et al., 2014), and actors' capacities to link diverse policy subsystems (Hoberg and Morawski, 1997). Substantial research has stressed factors that affect the implementation of public policy (Sabatier and Mazmanian, 1980), particularly dealing with the implementation of a single forest policy issue (Schulz et al., 2014; Gale and Cadman, 2014), as policy science is now a firm base of forest policy studies (Arts, 2012). Forest policy development considering sectoral and sub-sectoral relationships has also been analyzed by Rayner et al. (2010). Meanwhile, much less effort has been given to the analysis of multiple policy changes over a longer period of time (Jenkins-Smith et al., 1991) and relating power issues and the evolution of power resources over time (Prabowo et al., 2016, 2017; Maryudi et al., 2016; Maryudi and Sahide, 2017a, 2017b). Accordingly, Sadath and Krott (2012) developed the Analytical Policy Program model to analyze two decades of forest policy changes in Bangladesh. In addition, many studies have focused to some extent on the importance of actors' power networks in the policy-making process (Öberg et al., 2015; Fischer, 2014), and the identification and associations of powerful actors in specific forest-related cases (Schusser et al., 2015; Rowe, 2015; Brockhaus et al., 2014; Hasanagas, 2016; Aurenhammer, 2017). However, the power consequences and implications of forest policy changes rarely have been attributed due importance within public policy analysis. Since power relations shape policy processes and policy output (Ingold, 2011), the degree of involvement of the actors who gain the most power from policy changes may dictate the output of policies. On the other hand, although there the potential to shift state governance towards a more participatory approach has been discussed (Ongolo, 2015; Peters and Pierre, 2000), nevertheless, scholars have observed the enduring dominance of the state actors in many of the new governance initiatives (Arts, 2014). Moreover, the importance of non-domestic donor bureaucracies and international organizations have been intensifying and these organizations have been acting as a catalyst for change in the country's policy system by providing funding and technical instrumentation (Thompson, 1995; Gale and Cadman, 2014; Agrawal and Gibson, 1999; Bernstein and Cashore, 2012); whereas, previously, the majority of policy changes in Bangladesh's forestry sector had taken place because of the influence of foreign donors (Rahman et al., 2016a). This is true in many developing countries, where these countries with the help of international organizations and donors, have set up new participatory institutions for the local management of forests (Arts, 2014). Therefore, it is important to study the state bureaucracies' power in connection with the policy tasks resulting from policy changes, since they control and influence the outcome in public policy (cf. Wintrobe, 1997).

3. Theoretical and analytical underpinnings

3.1. Concept of policy change and policy program

In general, public policy intervention is done to address certain issues within social, economic, and environmental contexts. According to Markard et al. (2016, p. 217), "policies are the answer of the political system to societal problems". The analysis of policy change is perceived by policy science as the understanding of incremental or radical changes where stability of the policy process and policy outcomes are explained in accordance with the influencing factors and relevant actors (Giessen, 2011; Sadath and Krott, 2012; Krott, 2005; Voitleithner, 2002). Heclo defined policy change as a large-scale social, economic, and political change resulting from political action, i.e. the interactions of people within the policy community; these interactions are based on power and interests (Heclo, 1974). Subsequently, Sabatier categorized the parameters for policy change as being relatively stable and the short-term influential aspects of policy subsystems as being a stimulant for change (Sabatier, 1988). According to him, shared values and mutual beliefs determine the behavior and actions of different policy actors within the policy community who form advocacy coalitions and act as a driving factor for policy change (Giessen, 2011; Sadath and Krott, 2012). However, policy change analysis has been always a challenge for policy scientists because of the complex nature of policy processes, as the analysis has to deal with many actors and their perspectives on certain issues (Sotirov and Memmler, 2012), even though policy change analysis has been in the center of policy science (John, 2003; Howlett and Ramesh, 2003; Stewart, 2006). In most of the literature, it is found that policy changes have been studied on singular case basis. The analysis of a sectoral policy changes over 25 years poses new challenges, as each change has its own mix of policy actors and driving factors, hence Kingdon's (2003) multiple stream theory concept is a good theoretical basis for such long-term policy-change analysis