



Identifying barriers and levers of biodiversity mainstreaming in four cases of transnational governance of land and water

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ABSTRACT

Mainstreaming biodiversity into the governance of economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries is required to reverse biodiversity loss and achieve globally adopted conservation targets. Governments have recognized this but little progress has been made. This paper addresses the following research question: What are the barriers and levers for mainstreaming biodiversity into economic sectors that exert high pressure on biodiversity? This question is approached through applying an analytical framework developed from literature on mainstreaming and Environmental Policy Integration as well as governance theory and practice to four cases in agriculture, agro-forestry and fisheries covering multi-level and transnational governance contexts. Decision-making and governance in these cases look quite different compared to the kind of public policy machinery of governmental bureaucracies that much EPI literature has focused on. Our analysis demonstrates mainstreaming efforts in some of our cases at the degree of harmonization and even coordination among key actors. It further identifies a number of 'additional' barriers and levers that from an Environmental Policy Integration perspective would be considered as external factors out of reach for mainstreaming efforts. The results are pertinent for the evaluation of EPI performance because the governance perspective expands the borders of who can initiate, enable and sustain mainstreaming, what scope of regulatory norms they can use and the potentially useful resources for the process.

1. Introduction

The major pressures on biodiversity loss are found in economic sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries (Kok et al., 2014). This means that addressing direct pressures and underlying causes in these economic sectors is a key approach to reverse biodiversity loss as conservation measures in e.g. protected areas will never be enough. Environmental policy integration (EPI) is a concept and approach that has as underlying rationale exactly this – to address the drivers rather than symptoms of environmental degradation by mainstreaming/integrating environmental issues in policy areas where the drivers are

located (Lafferty and Hovden, 2003; Persson, 2004; Runhaar et al., 2014). Fittingly thus, the need for mainstreaming biodiversity into the governance of economic sectors has been recognized in the most important international instrument to address biodiversity, the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), as one of its strategic goals adopted in 2010 by its 196 Parties. In more specific terms countries agreed to strive to “[a]ddress the underlying causes of biodiversity loss by mainstreaming biodiversity across government and society” (CBD, 2010). In the context of the CBD and domestic biodiversity policy this process of integration is commonly referred to as mainstreaming, reflecting the point of departure and intention of biodiversity policy

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makers to put this issue on the agenda in economic sectors where it is given scant if any attention. As this global policy context is our focus we will use the concept of mainstreaming, rather than integration, in this paper, recognizing the almost interchangeable character of the two concepts (see below). The broadly accepted definition of mainstreaming in the CBD/biodiversity context is ‘the process of embedding biodiversity considerations into policies, strategies and practices of key public and private actors that impact or rely on biodiversity, so that biodiversity is conserved and sustainably used both locally and globally’ (Huntley and Redford, 2014). However, in the follow-up of countries’ efforts to implement this approach it has become clear that progress is slow or non-existent and that the mainstreaming of biodiversity into economic sectors is a considerable challenge (Huntley and Redford, 2014; Leadley et al., 2014). There can be multiple reasons for this low implementation such as the lack of relevant knowledge and sufficient interest to take action in those sectors (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al., 2017). This paper seeks to further unpack possible reasons by addressing the following research question: What are barriers and levers for mainstreaming biodiversity into economic sectors that exert high pressure on biodiversity?

We have elsewhere developed an analytical framework for answering this question, see Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al. (2017), by drawing on literature on EPI (and related literature on mainstreaming) and governance theory and practice. The inclusion of governance literature reflects our underlying assumption that a mainstreaming approach confined to public policy actors and/or hierarchical steering – which is often the focus of EPI literature – is not sufficient in the context of relevant economic sectors that influence the underlying causes of biodiversity loss, such as agriculture, fisheries, forestry, mining and tourism. These sectors are governed both by a broader set of actors beyond national governments and a broader span of modes of steering than by hierarchical means. Both these aspects are included in our conceptualization of governance. The importance of a wider set of actors was already reflected in the definition of biodiversity mainstreaming that is used in the CBD context (see above). In many economic sectors there are multilevel and/or transnational dimensions of governance that can include steering processes ranging from ‘webs of control’ to ‘webs of dialogue’ with mechanisms such as self-regulation, naming and shaming of corporate practices, professional association dialogues etc. (Braithwaite and Drahos, 2000). Understanding the barriers and levers for biodiversity mainstreaming in economic sectors should therefore benefit from insights from the governance literature.

In this paper we apply the framework by Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al. (2017) for identifying barriers and levers for mainstreaming in contexts of *governance* to one agricultural, one agro-forestry and two fisheries cases. Considering the framework as an initial effort to broaden EPI to contexts of governance, as suggested for example by Runhaar et al. (2014), in this paper we do not approach our application of the framework to empirical cases as a rigorous testing, but rather as a modest attempt to test its validity and see if we are on the right track in developing the framework as a tool for answering our research question. The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 provides the analytical framework applied in our study. Section 3 elaborates on the analytical framework and methodology that we apply. Section 4 provides a brief overview of each case while Section 5 presents the analysis of barriers and levers across the four cases. The paper concludes with a brief discussion on the results and their implications for the performance of, in this case, biodiversity policy integration.

2. Mainstreaming in governance – an analytical framework

There are many partly overlapping concepts in the literature for the efforts of making more integrated and assumingly more effective policy for issues that are cross-boundary in nature such as mainstreaming, (environmental) policy integration, interplay management and policy coherence, see also Visseren-Hamakers (2015). We are in this paper not

going into detail of the possible nuances among how these terms are used among scholars but rather use ‘mainstreaming’ because this is the term used among the policy makers in the issue we are focusing on – biodiversity.¹ The concept of mainstreaming is also more common in the field of global and multilevel governance beyond the EU.² We still take the concept of mainstreaming to encompass the forms of EPI elaborated by Persson & Runhaar (this issue); coordination/harmonisation/prioritisation. But as we are focusing on contexts of *governance* that involves steering efforts both by multiple actors including and beyond national governments and a broad span of modes of steering, we apply a framework developed by some of the authors for this specific purpose (Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen et al., 2017). The framework draws on two sets of literature; the literature on EPI and mainstreaming particularly of environment and biodiversity – for example Tang and Tang (2014); Persson (2009); Nunan et al. (2012); Sietz et al. (2011); Oberthür and Stokke (2011); Jordan and Lenschow (2008) – and the literature on the theory and practice of governance especially in transnational contexts – for example Termeer et al. (2016); Austin and Seitanidi (2012); Glasbergen (2011); Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Kok (2011); Andonova (2010); Heifetz et al. (2009); and Uhl-Bien et al. (2007). The context of governance, as defined above, that characterizes many economic sectors has several implications for the forms of mainstreaming that can be attempted and thus where one can find barriers and levers and for which we found the literature on mainstreaming and EPI insufficient. We developed our analytical framework by approaching our networks of governance researchers, using them for consultation and a targeted literature review. This led us to identify three key dimensions and ten sub-dimensions of governance that are important for comprehensively analysing the governance contexts for economic sectors. The first key dimension is *the institutional structure* of a sector that guides the acts and interactions of actors. It includes the sub-dimensions: 1) vertical and horizontal interactions, and 2) policies and norms. The second key dimension is *the motivational structure* that underlies the drivers for behaviour and behavioural change. The associated sub-dimensions are; 1) values and interests, 2) framing and, 3) leadership. The third key dimension is the *distribution of means* that structures interdependencies and the range of alternatives available. Here relevant sub-dimensions are; 1) knowledge, 2) time, and 3) financial resources. Importantly, the sub-dimensions are not mutually exclusive, a feature like leadership is here put in the motivational category but can also be seen as a resource. Several of the sub-dimensions are also relevant when looking at government dominated and/or hierarchical steering (e.g. leadership, financial resources, policies and norms) but require quite different characteristics in governance contexts. Other dimensions, such as vertical and horizontal interactions and framing, become important particularly because of the context of governance with diverse actors engaging in networks.

In the next step, again using expert review and consultation, we identified examples of barriers and levers for mainstreaming for each (sub-)dimension in contexts of governance in order to illustrate the kind of barriers and levers the framework enables us to identify (see Table 1). Clearly more external factors such as broader institutional capacity, public opinion, and socio-economic conditions can be very influential on the potential for mainstreaming to take off and the framework actually ‘internalizes’ some external factors as relevant and indeed possible for governance to influence.

¹ Biodiversity is a cross-boundary issue as the pressures on biodiversity – as explained in the introduction – loss can be found across several economic sectors and thereby policy areas in government.

² Karlsson-Vinkhuyzen and Kok (2011) have in earlier work distinguished between mainstreaming and integration through specifying the former to having a unidirectional aim, one issue being put on the agenda of other policy issues, while integration can be seen as having a more bi- or multi-directional ambition of integrating the priorities of several issue areas in each other. This distinction is, however, not consistent in the literature.

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