



Ecosystem-based management in Canada and Norway: The importance of political leadership and effective decision-making for implementation

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ABSTRACT

A comparison of a Norwegian and two Canadian management plans reveals that most of the measures in the Norwegian plan were put into practice, whereas the Canadian plans did not result in the implementation of any new measures. This paper applies implementation theory to explain the different results. First, there is a striking difference in the leadership of the two governments and the way they organized for the planning. The Norwegian government led the process in a top-down manner and tried to apply a “whole-of-government” approach. The Canadian government delegated the entire task to the regional branches of one ministry alone. The different roles taken may be explained by different political and economic contexts that create different motivations for the governments to engage. Second, there were different ways of deciding when conflicts arose. The Norwegian coalition government negotiated internal compromises in the form of package deals. In Canada, the collaborative planning based on consensus concealed disagreements in high-level statements and pushed concrete solutions forward to later action planning that never occurred. These processes reflect different national policy styles and resulted in policy designs that created a very different impetus for implementation. The analysis demonstrates how theory-driven case-study methodology can lead to cumulative results.

1. Introduction

Ecosystem-based management (EBM)¹ has become a key concept for the management of the oceans. The purpose is to keep the ecosystem in good health and to reduce user conflicts. In order to achieve this, all human activities affecting an ecosystem should be managed in an integrated manner (Arctic Council ministers, 2013; Curtin and Prellezo, 2010). Thus, it is of vital importance to formulate and implement policies that lead to necessary changes in the operations of relevant human activities. Unfortunately, there is not much empirical knowledge about how to achieve such changes (Arbo and Thüy, 2016). This has motivated the current research on the extent to which policies formulated in ecosystem-based plans for large marine areas are actually implemented.

In a previous case study (Sander, 2018), implementation theory was applied to evaluate and explain the results of the Norwegian Barents Sea Management Plan (BSMP). This article follows up by a cross-case comparison of BSMP with two Canadian cases, the Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management Plan (ESSIM) and the Placentia Bay/Grand Banks Integrated Management Plan (PB/GB). The research in Canada built on the same theoretical platform as the study of the BSMP and was conducted in the same manner (George and Bennett, 2005, pp 67–73). The first question to all the cases was to evaluate the degree to which

the measures in the plans were implemented. While the Norwegian government system implemented most of the measures in the BSMP, early in the investigation of the Canadian plans, it became evident that they had not led to the implementation of any new policies or measures, despite years of work. The main question for the research thus became to explain *why the results of the planning in BSMP differed so much from those of ESSIM and PB/GB?* After all, Canada and Norway share many features affecting the governability of their ecosystems (Mahon et al., 2010), and the two states started with EBM at about the same time (Cicin-Sain et al., 2015, Hoel, 2008). Answering this question would also help in identifying what is conducive to the implementation of policies formulated in ecosystem-based plans in general.

The article starts with a description of the analytical framework for implementation studies that has guided the research, before turning to methods and materials, in particular case study methodology. Then, an introduction to the cases follows, presented as chronological narratives. The next section contains the comparative discussion of the cases, structured according to the analytical framework. The focus is on the Canadian cases, contrasted with the relevant findings from the previous analysis of BSMP, finally being summarised in an explanation for the Canadian results alone. The last section draws general conclusions about variables that may explain the different results, structured according to the elements in the analytical framework. In addition, some

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¹ List of abbreviations: BSMP = Barents Sea Management Plan DFO = (Department of) Fisheries and Oceans Canada (a federal ministry); EBM = ecosystem-based management; ESSIM = Eastern Scotian Shelf Integrated Management Plan; PB/GB = Placentia Bay/Grand Banks Integrated Management Plan; LOMA = Large Ocean Management Area (see Fig. 2); MPA = marine protected area.

suggestions for further research on what is conducive to the successful implementation of EBM plans are provided.

2. Implementation theory

Given the many calls for implementing EBM, it is surprising that empirical studies of EBM have not applied implementation theory prior to Sander (2018). In fact, literature and database searches indicate that there are few applications thereof to marine policies in general. This may be the result of marine sciences' tendency to build their own traditions at sea, disregarding experiences from land (Jay, 2010). Another reason may be that there have been few cases of adopted EBM policies to study.

Implementation studies primarily grew out of evaluation research in the 1970s, in the aftermath of societal reforms in the US that did not live up to the expectations (Winter, 2012). The field's first contribution to explain why was to search for "failures" in the way policy interventions were actually performed (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). Later, it became evident that there was a need to move beyond the implementation phase and take the wider policy process, the policy design and the context into consideration (Palumbo and Calista, 1990). Researchers expanded upon their initial search for failures by investigating success stories as well, and more nuanced questions arose about the criteria for evaluation. The core field of study thus is the translation of public policy into practice and the reasons as to why the results are achieved. Despite several attempts to synthesise the findings, there is no general theory available, regardless of contexts and policies (Goggin et al., 1990; Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983; Sætren, 2014). Winter (2012) has argued that aiming for such a theory is utopian. Instead, there is a need for more specific theories and hypotheses. This has inspired the current initiative to apply implementation theory specifically to EBM plans.

Winter also has synthesised previous research in a frequently cited analytical framework that covers the entire policy process (Fig. 1). It is meant as a roadmap for investigations, presenting key factors and mechanisms that often explain implementation results, not a deterministic, all-inclusive theory (Hupe and Sætren, 2015; Winter, 2012).

The framework presents two main alternatives for evaluating the results of a policy, which is the dependent variable. *Output* is the delivered results after implementation, often in the form of the exercising of authority or services to the public. *Outcome* is the subsequent impacts, often measured as goal achievement towards the policy's objectives. An alternative measure for outcome is the effects on the problems that motivated the policy's introduction. Relating policy interventions to outcomes is more complex than explaining output. Other policies may support or counteract the policy under study, and a number of external factors beyond the control of policy-makers may occur simultaneously (market forces, climate change etc). Therefore, output is often preferred in implementation studies, though both alternatives for evaluation are needed (Winter, 2012).

The independent variables, which could explain the results, can be found in the context, the policy formulation process, the design of an adopted policy, and in the implementation process.

The *context* may cover numerous factors (Mahon et al., 2010). Changes in socio-economic conditions, like economic cycles, may affect the political perception of which problems that require attention, as well as the resources available to address them. Changes in governments can also have profound effects on ongoing policy processes.

Policy formulation covers the political processes of agenda setting, finding acceptable ways of addressing identified problems, and the final decision-making leading to the adoption of a policy. Winter has highlighted three factors in this phase (Fig. 1). Conflicts will often arise when actors with different interests and resources try to get their problem definitions and solutions accepted. An important question is whether such parties would accept a final decision, or whether struggles would continue during the implementation phase. For a policy to be efficient, it is also important that the selected policy instruments work in support of the objectives. This requires knowledge of cause-effect relationships that often is unavailable, and a willingness by the decision-makers to select effective policy instruments. However, decision-makers may be more engaged in symbolic behaviour, such as demonstrating good intentions, ideology or alliances, than in designing policies that actually solve problems.

A *policy design* will typically contain a description of problems, a

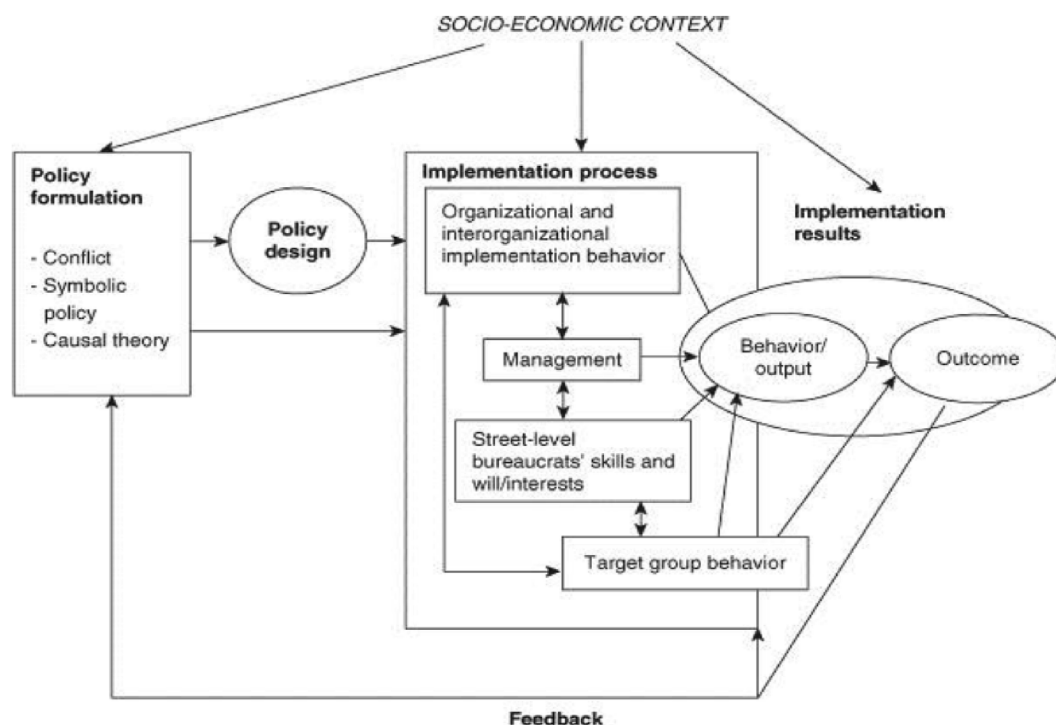


Fig. 1. Winter's Integrated framework for implementation studies (Winter, 2012).

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