



# Against all odds? Implementing a policy for ecosystem-based management of the Barents Sea

Gunnar Sander

The Norwegian College of Fishery Science, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, 9037, Tromsø, Norway



## ARTICLE INFO

### Keywords:

Barents Sea  
Ecosystem-based management  
Implementation theory  
Marine policy  
Policy analysis

## ABSTRACT

Ecosystem-based management (EBM) should lead to policy that effectively addresses major negative impacts on the ecosystem in order to solve the problems identified. So far, there is little empirical knowledge about what is conducive to the formulation and implementation of such policies. The article suggests that implementation theory is an appropriate theoretical platform for acquiring such knowledge. General implementation theory is a starting point that gradually can be specified for implementation of EBM through carefully selected case studies. The article describes the theory and demonstrates its applicability by analysing the implementation of the measures in the Barents Sea Management Plan. Despite a policy design that violated several traditional recommendations for successful implementation, most measures in the plan were actually put into practice. The explanation lies in the Norwegian political-administrative system, the mobilization of knowledge, the collaboration created by involving a group of ministries and the authoritative handling of conflicts by the cabinet. All these explanations refer to processes occurring during the formulation of the policy, thus illustrating the need for a broader focus than the implementation process itself when studying policy implementation. The political leadership of the Norwegian government was decisive, demonstrating that EBM can be effectively implemented in a top-down fashion.

## 1. Introduction

Ecosystem-based management (EBM)<sup>1</sup> has been widely recognized as a strategy for the sustainable management of all the world's oceans. Integrated management of all human activities affecting an ecosystem is one of its core characteristics (Arctic Council ministers, 2013). This distinguishes EBM from traditional single-sector management. Moreover, EBM defines the whole ecosystem as the management object, not selected species, habitats or concerns. These holistic ambitions make EBM a complex undertaking that has been slow to move from conceptual ideas to practical approaches and implementation.

A substantial EBM literature has emerged (Curtin and Prellezo, 2010). Much of this is normative, defining the concept and potential approaches (Arkema et al., 2006; Grumbine, 1994; Juda and Hennessey, 2001; Levin and Lubchenco, 2008; Sutinen and Hennessey, 2005). Emphasis has been placed on understanding ecosystem properties and finding ways to assess cumulative human impacts upon them. However, for EBM to reach its objective of sustainable use of ecosystem goods and services, ecosystem knowledge must be translated into politics and management, ensuring that the findings from assessments are met with

effective responses that are put into action. It is therefore a problem that both the normative and empirical literature on EBM pay less attention to political processes, the content of policies and how to manage multiple human activities in an integrated fashion (Arbo and Thuy, 2016). In order to understand such issues, EBM should be studied through the analytical lenses of a variety of social science disciplines. Implementation theory should be particularly appropriate on the background of the many calls for implementation of EBM and the obstacles encountered (Sætren, 2014; Winter 2012). However, literature searches show that implementation theory has not yet been applied to EBM, and probably rarely on marine issues at all. Implementation theory has achieved substantial knowledge about what facilitate or hinder the successful implementation of public policies. This is a solid platform for studies also in the marine realm in order to reach empirically based conclusions for specific marine policies. Challenges are significant when coordination of different policy sectors and levels of governance is required, as is the case for EBM. As a point of departure, it would be reasonable to expect limited success, as indicated in the title.

This article introduces implementation theory as an analytical tool for empirical studies of attempts to apply EMB. This offers a theoretical

E-mail address: [Gunnar.Sander@uit.no](mailto:Gunnar.Sander@uit.no).

<sup>1</sup> List of abbreviations: BSMP = Barents Sea Management Plan, EBM = ecosystem-based management, EEA = European Economic Area, IUU = illegal, unreported and unregulated (fishing), ME = Ministry of the Environment, MFCA = Ministry of Fisheries and Coastal Affairs, MPA = marine protected area, MPE = Ministry for Petroleum and Energy.

basis enabling a move from atheoretical accounts to carefully designed case studies that may lead to more systematic accumulation of knowledge, potentially also a contingent theory for implementation of EBM (George and Bennett, 2005). The Norwegian Barents Sea Management Plan (BSMP) is used as a case. This is a rare example of a mature system for EBM where political decisions have been implemented and systems for monitoring and revision are put in place. Implementation theory has been applied in asking questions to the case, and it has structured the presentation of the article. The findings thus are conveyed in a way that can facilitate later cross-case comparisons in order to test if the conclusions can be generalized to different contexts. Consecutive Norwegian governments have presented one white paper introducing a national ocean policy founded on EBM (ME, 2002) and three white papers on the BSMP (ME, 2006, 2011, 2015), which became the model for similar plans for the Norwegian Sea (2009, 2017) and the North Sea (2013). The major research question here is to examine the extent to which the measures in the BSMP have been implemented, and explain the results. As will be seen, addressing this requires an understanding of the characteristics of the policy formulation process, the selected policy and the implementation process. This distinguishes the article in several respects from the previous literature on the BSMP (for instance Knol, 2010b; Olsen et al., 2007; von Quillfeldt et al., 2009). It focuses on the policy and results of the plan, not on the initial assessments. Political actors play the main roles in the story, not experts. Moreover, the information is based on extensive interviews.

The article starts with a presentation of implementation theory, and a description of the methods applied. The subsequent sections are structured according to the theoretical framework before a discussion addressing explanations and a conclusion summarizing findings and putting the case into perspective.

## 2. Implementation theory

Studies of the implementation of public policies emerged at least as early as the 1950s (Sætren, 2005), but is often attributed to Pressman and Wildavsky's influential book "Implementation" from 1973 (Pressman and Wildavsky, 1984). They studied a federal program in the US that aimed to provide jobs for minorities, but with meagre results. A major explanation was that too many actors had to coordinate or give their consent in long sequences of decision and veto points. Such explorative studies of single cases were typical for the first generation of implementation studies, which frequently concluded that implementing public policy resulted in fallacies and failures. However, when followed over a longer period of time, researchers found that implementers learned from initial problems and adapted their approaches so that performance improved (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983, pp. 274–282). It also became evident that it was insufficient only to study the implementation process and blame the implementers when results did not live up to expectations. Success or failure also depends on the wider policy process, particularly the processes of formulating the policy, and the content of the policy itself (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983; Palumbo and Calista, 1990, pp. 5–17). Instead of continuing with searches for failures, more nuanced questions arose about the criteria for success or failure and what could explain either of these results (Hupe and Sætren, 2015).

Several attempts have been made to synthesize results, specify causal relationships and develop a general theory of policy implementation that could guide research and explain implementation results (Goggin et al., 1990; Hill and Hupe, 2014, pp. 44–59; Winter 2012). Despite such efforts, there is still no general theory across all the particular contexts (Sætren, 2014). Winter has argued that aiming for such a theory is utopian (Winter, 2012). Instead, researchers should develop and test partial theories and hypotheses by a diversity of methods and clearer use of concepts. His own contribution is a framework for implementation studies (Fig. 1). It is meant as a roadmap for analysis, not a theory itself; different theories may apply to different

parts of it.

*Policy formulation* is the phase where policy is developed, discussed and finally adopted. Conflict is one critical issue, and may lead to unclear compromises with vaguely described or inconsistent goals. That gives unclear guidance for action and wide leeway for implementers to modify the policy. Unresolved conflicts that persist in the implementation process may turn this into a new arena for continuous struggles. A core issue in the political bargaining is the selection of means to reach the ends. An effective policy must build on a valid causal theory and select means that work. Such a theory may not exist or be unknown to policy makers. They may also disregard its recommendations due to ideology, habit or interventions from stakeholders. Or they may resort to symbolic policy instead of substantive action because it can be advantageous to create a favourable image of themselves by demonstrating intentions, ideology or alliances (Winter and Nielsen, 2008, pp. 58–70).

The *policy design*, or adopted policy, typically contains objectives and measures consisting of policy instruments, designation of institutions in charge of implementation, and allocation of resources for solving the tasks (May, 2012). Traditional advice says that it is conducive to good implementation if objectives are clear, the degree of required change is low, and effective instruments and simple administrative structures are chosen (Mazmanian and Sabatier, 1983). This has been criticized as unrealistic. The political system routinely produces policies with ambiguous goals (Matland, 1995). Regarding the effectiveness of policy instruments, the way individual instruments work depends on the context, and there is little knowledge about the interplay when instruments are combined into packages (May, 2012). Moreover, designating simple administrative structures is not easy when governments increasingly get involved in solving complex problems where many public and private organizations have to find joint solutions (O'Toole, 2012). A more realistic advice is to design a policy that creates incentives for the implementers to take requisite actions by building their capacity, increasing their commitment to the basic policy goals, and signalling desired courses of action (May, 2012).

The *implementation process*: The management of relationships between organizations plays an important role in explaining the implementation of complex policies. Cooperation and coordination entail costs and benefits. On the cost side are reduced autonomy and substantial transaction costs, most evidently time and resources spent on establishing and maintaining the relationship. Different interests may also lead to conflicts and dysfunctional strategic games, like free-riding or turf wars (Lundin, 2007b; Winter and Nielsen, 2008). One common reason why collaboration still occurs is that the organizations involved are linked under the same hierarchy – for example ministries under a cabinet. A hierarchy can impose and support coordination with the authority needed. However, usually there are strong barriers towards involving the highest level when problems and conflicts arise (O'Toole, 2012). Organizations can also be convinced about the advantages of cooperation voluntarily. Sharing common goals is one reason for this. They may also get the advantages of resources in other organizations, such as access to funds, information, human resources and political legitimacy. Trust between the partners also plays a fundamental role (Lundin, 2007a). These assets must be continuously cultivated. Skilful administrators in complex organizational settings typically interact with counterparts in other organizations and stakeholders to build support, persuade, negotiate and coordinate, sometimes also to fend off disruptive influences. Networking this way can improve collaboration and the performance of policies (O'Toole, 2012).

There are two major options for selecting the dependent variable in implementation studies, or what should be explained: output or outcome (Hill and Hupe, 2014, pp. 141–143; Winter 2012). *Output* is the immediate delivery of results in the form of services to the public or exercise of authority. *Outcome* is the subsequent impacts, often measured as goal achievement compared with the policy's objectives. The linkages from output to outcome can be seen as a series of causal-effect

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/8060714>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/8060714>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)