MSFD implementation in the Netherlands: the challenge of linking science to policy

David Goldsborough

Mare “People and the Sea”
June 25- 28 Amsterdam

Hogeschool VHL University of Applied Sciences

IMARES WAGENINGEN UR

Focus of the study

- What is the **role of knowledge** **(science**) and **knowledge actors** **(scientists)** in the process that led to the Dutch MSFD policy document

- How do the **knowledge components (project outputs)** fit within the overall **policy cycle** of decision-making? >>**Uptake of knowledge**

Challenge

- Linking the findings to the concepts salience, credibility, legitimacy (Clark et al., 2010).
- Describing to what extent knowledge was used (uptake of knowledge)
- Reporting the results in an suitable format

  -> All involved now who is who
- Discuss findings with involved stakeholders

  -> reflect on process and their own role

  -> learn from experience

Context

- Legal obligation NL to submit MSFD policy document, including supporting documents, to the EC
- Supporting documents:
  1. Initial assessment
  2. Good Environmental Status
  3. Targets and Indicators
- Deadline 2012
- Responsibility of Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (I&M)
- Policy Cycle -> Policy implementation

Institutional setting

- Responsible Ministry I&M (Project leader)
  - Supporting agency (Waterdienst) responsible for day to day management and coordination
  - Preferred research institute DELTARES overall task scientific underpinning (scientific lead)
  - Stakeholder process done by designated governmental officer
  - Policy support from other agency (RWS Noordzee)
  - DELTARES funding I&M
- Ministry of Economic Affairs (EZ)
  - Provide policy advise
  - Preferred research institute IMARES smaller task on specific elements
  - IMARES funding EZ

Research design

- Semi-structured interviews in Dutch with key actors in process

- Focus interviews
  - Role interviewee?
  - Research question articulation?
  - Uptake of Knowledge?
    - 3 reports -> policy document?
  - Internal process organisation?
  - Scientific evaluation of 3 reports?
  - Feedback loops in process?
  - Stakeholder involvement?

11 interviews

Interviewee code	Organisation	Role in the project
Project leader 1	I&M	MFSD project coordinator
Project leader 2	I&M	MSFD project coordinator
Stakeholder process organizer	I&M	Stakeholder process MSFD
Project coordinator	Waterdienst (supporting agency I&M)	Project coordinator
Policy advisor	EZ	Policy advisor
Policy supporter	RWS Noordzee (supporting agency I&M)	Policy support
Researcher 1	DELTARES	Project coordinator DELTARES/ scientist
Researcher 2	IMARES	Project coordinator IMARES/ scientist
Researcher 3	IMARES	Scientist/reviewer
Stakeholder 1	VISNED	stakeholder
Stakeholder 2	P-VIS	stakeholder

Timeline

- 2008 I&M start with MSFD implementation process
- 2009 start of research project
- Research effort 2010 – 2011
- End 2010 intervention by I&M (Expectation mismatch I&M and EZ on role scientist)
- Agreement on roles and better communication (high level)
- Beginning 2011 new project leader
- 2011 during completion scientific reports policy team starts writing policy document
- 2012 Policy document submitted to EU including 3 supporting documents

Role of scientists

- The researcher as.... (Pielke, 2007)

View of Science	
Linear model	Stakeholder model
Pure scientist • Focus on research (the truth) with no consideration for its use or practical implication of results • Has no direct connection with decision-makers. • Research as a reservoir of knowledge available to all decision-makers	**Issue Advocate** • Focus on the implications of research for a particular political agenda • Seeks to participate in the decision-making process (engage science & decision-makers) Seeks to reduce the scope of available choice
Science Arbiter • Stays removed from explicit policy and politics • Has direct interaction with decision-makers to provide them expert judgment • Seeks to focus on issues that can be resolved by science • Removed from a closer interaction with stakeholders	**Honest Broker of Policy Alternatives** • Engages in decision-making exploring possible alternatives and their implications. The goal is not to eliminate options but to expand the scope of choices available to policy makers. • Integrates scientific knowledge with stakeholder concerns • Places scientific understanding in the context of a variety of policy options

Research question/task clear?

- Policy advisor: <The main problem in this project was mismanagement of expectations>
- Project coordinator: <It was clear what the scientist needed to do and they should have delivered the goods>
- Project leader 1:<It was not clear how we should implement the MSFD so I spent a lot of time discussing this with colleagues from France and the UK and people in Brussels>
- Project leader 2: <The scientist should never have been asked to produce the policy document>
- Project leader 2: <The GES report should have not been solely in the hands of the scientists>
- Researcher 2: <During the process I discovered that we were expected to help write the policy document>
- Researcher 1:<I&M did not have an overview who is doing what>

Scientific value (credibility) report

1. Initial assessment
   - Perceived by all as an acceptable scientific review also thanks to input stakeholder
2. Good Environmental Status (GES)
   - Not a scientific report. Defining GES requires making policy decisions. Content report mainly from expert workshops: expert judgement. Peer review therefor not possible.

- Policy supporter: <The scientist were clearly out of their comfort zone>
- Researcher 1: <This report was an incredible struggle for us>

1. Targets and Indicators
   - Based on GES report and as a follow up the scientist could not write a good report

Legitimacy (fairness)

- Stakeholder 1: <We were very happy with the process and the fact that we could comment and add to draft reports>
- Stakeholder 2: < We felt our comments were all taken seriously>
- Researcher 2: <We were not happy that the first draft was also sent to the stakeholders>
- Stake holder process organizer: <It was important for us that we stuck to our stakeholder process including the timing>
- Researcher 1: <800 comments were made regarding the first report but only 25% was relevant>

Uptake of Knowledge

- Other processes dominated production of policy report and were used for input:
  - OSPAR
  - EU
  - LEI CBA report MSFD descriptors
- Shifting insights during process
- Feedback loops were not very effective
- Research was more or less finished when writing of policy document started

Main findings

- Delegated project design with central role for supporting agency led to complications (communication and expectations mismatch)
- Mismatch hard science and policy decisions
  - MSFD is policy rich
  - Different expectations role of participants
  - Scientist help write policy document?
- Roles of actors not clearly defined and shared with each other
- Starting early (2009) turned into disadvantage as external influence grew:
  - E.g. OSPAR-ICES input on MSFD process
- Stakeholder involvement successful from perspective stakeholders
  - Clear role in joint fact finding
  - Scientist have different view on this -> not ready to share first results

Main findings

- Salience -> relevant for policy document? LOW
- Credibility -> meet scientific standard? Only 1st report other 2 not because policy decisions required LOW-MEDIUM
- Legitimacy -> open to other perspectives: fair? Stakeholders very happy with their role and influence HIGH

- Uptake -> very little reference to supporting reports in policy document: other newer sources were preferred LOW