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

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>View of Science</th>
<th>Linear model</th>
<th>Stakeholder model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pure scientist</td>
<td>Focus on research (the truth) with no consideration for its use or practical implication of results</td>
<td>Issue Advocate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has no direct connection with decision-makers.</td>
<td>- Focus on the implications of research for a particular political agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research as a reservoir of knowledge available to all decision-makers</td>
<td>- Seeks to participate in the decision-making process (engage science &amp; decision-makers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Seeks to reduce the scope of available choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science Arbiter</td>
<td>Stays removed from explicit policy and politics</td>
<td>Honest Broker of Policy Alternatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Has direct interaction with decision-makers to provide them expert judgment</td>
<td>- 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seeks to focus on issues that can be resolved by science</td>
<td>- Integrates scientific knowledge with stakeholder concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Removed from a closer interaction with stakeholders</td>
<td>- Places scientific understanding in the context of a variety of policy options</td>
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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)

• 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>
- **Stakeholder 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