P20 / Nature Policies and Protected Areas: regulatory, governance and evidence perspectives

Topic : ENVIRONMENT, SDGs, ENERGY

Chair : Valentina Dinica (Victoria University of Wellington)

GENERAL OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE

Biodiversity persistence and ecological quality are critical for the achievement of many Sustainable Development Goals. They are a central focus to SGD 14 and 15, while contributing to SDG 13. The challenge to implement the SGDs, and wider concerns with climate change, biodiversity loss, the deterioration of critical ecosystem services and environmental public health, have led to a better appreciation of the potential roles of Protected Areas (PAs) as tools for nature policies and instruments for sustainable development (Aubertin and Rodary 2011, Ritzel et al. 2023). National and transnational regulatory reform processes have been initiated in some jurisdictions, to enhance the ecological representativeness of PA networks and transform them in integrated and functional ecological and socio-ecological *systems* (Cabin 2013, CBD Secretariate 2009).

The *functional ecological representativeness principle* of policy-making is incorporated in numerous decisions, implementing the 1992 UN Convention on Biological Diversity (Soutullo and Gudynas 2006). E.g., the 2004 Program of Work on Protected Areas requires signatory states to develop “comprehensive, effectively managed and ecologically representative national and regional systems of protected ideas” (CBD Secretariate 2004). The emphasis has shifted from the static and fragmented representation of culturally-valued landscapes and habitats (as ‘open-air-museum items’; Dinica 2022), to ecological functionality attributes and holistic indicators of ecosystem health, sustainable critical ecosystem services, and biotic persistence in the context of climate change (Mingarro and Lobo 2021, Pörtner et al. 2021, Thackway and Cresswell 1997).

Public policy and public administration perspectives to the study of PAs are essential, because PAs are spaces where human access is regulated by *special rules*. They may be grounded in legal frameworks and/or in strategies, policies or management plans for biodiversity/conservation/nature protection. The legal and policy frameworks may be generic or PA-specific; they are often multi-level, extensive, complex and - due to variable ages - conflicting and incoherent.

Currently, conceptual understandings and practitioner-focused policy insights remain severely under-developed, with respect to the fitness-for-purpose of PA designations and regulations to contribute to SDGs and to support the PAs' transition towards ecologically functional systems; likewise for the challenge to better integrate policy programs across related policy domains: nature policy programs, climate change mitigation and adaptation policies; land use, regional development and sustainable agricultural policies; and policies for urban parks or sustainable tourism.

The number of studies adopting policy perspectives remains limited (e.g. Bastmeijer 2016, Capotorti et al. 2012, Ferraro and Hanauer 2015, Kegamba et al. 2024, Lima and Ranieri 2018, Selman 2009). In the context of limited attention by public policy scholars, significant contributions have been made by natural scientists and geographers (e.g. Araújo et al. 2007, Çoruhlu and Çelik 2022, Dimitrakopoulos et al. 2004, Evans 2012, Ferraro 2013, Fuller et al 2010, Ioj? et al. 2010, Nichiforel et al. 2021, Niedzia?kowski et al. 2014, Svancara et al. 2005, Wang et al. 2021).

In so far as the regulation of human activities and infrastructures/facilities within PAs is concerned, scholars have occasionally researched the effectiveness of tourism regulations, usually in specific PAs or countries (Dinica 2017, Estima et al. 2014, Goodwin 2002, Thede et al. 2014). However, a wider range of human access options and socio-economic activities are often permitted, depending on the PA designation type (e.g. Nature/Scientific/Recreation Reserves, Nature Parks, National Parks; see Chape et al. 2008, Cumming et al. 2015).

This panel welcomes conceptual, methodological and empirical contributions, adopting public policy or interdisciplinary perspectives that advance scholarship on the following themes:

1) the interface between science and policies on nature protection generally, and on Protected Areas, specifically

2) the ecological effectiveness of nature policies, PA designations and regulations

3) the governance of Protected Areas

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CALL FOR PAPERS

This panel invites public policy scholars to contribute to the growing inter-disciplinary fields of nature policies and Protected Area policies, by means of case-studies, comparative research, syntheses, meta-analyses or integrative conceptual research. Exploratory and exploratory contributions are welcome. The key questions/topics examined in this panel address the following themes:

1) The interface between **science and policies** on nature protection generally, and Protected Areas, specifically:

· How do historical and contemporary *scientific paradigms* influence nature policies and PA designations, network structures and regulations (e.g. aspects such as the protected ecological values, management objectives and regulations on human access)?

· How to better incorporate *contemporary scientific insights* in the reform of nature policies and PA designations and the regulation of human access, for more ecologically-effective PA systems?

2) The **ecological effectiveness** of nature policies, PA designations and regulations:

· What is the *evidence* on the effectiveness of current nature policies and PA network structures, designations and regulations, for ecological objectives and SDGs? What roles does evidence play in policy-making processes? How do institutional structures and processes influence an evidence-informed policy approach?

· How to reform nature policy design and PA systems, to enhance *biotic persistence and resilience to climate change*?

· How to regulate and manage *human – wildlife interactions* more effectively, for species in different protection categories? Special attention will be paid to interactions with large carnivores.

3) The **governance** of Protected Areas:

· *Policy coordination / integration*: conceptual approaches and empirical evidence on the synergies of policies across relevant domains, to facilitate ecological outcomes and SDGs across PA

· What *participatory processes, methods and design features* help enhance public support for ecologically-effective PA systems? How can public engagement enhance the implementation of SDGs 13, 14 and 15 across PAs?

· Which regulatory approaches facilitate synergies between the rights of *indigenous peoples,* the wellbeing of *local communities* and ecologically-sound outcomes in PAs?

· How to operationalise the concepts of *adaptive governance and policies*, for climate resilient socio-ecological systems in PAs?
· What patterns of *policy leadership* help initiate and sustain successful transitions towards ecologically-effective PA systems, in *multi-level governance systems*?

The panel encourages analyses that help enhance the empirical-base on geographic regions hosting numerous multiuse Protected Areas as well as PAs located in the Global South and the Asia Pacific regions.

P20 / Nature Policies and Protected Areas: regulatory, governance and evidence perspectives

Chair : Valentina Dinica (Victoria University of Wellington)

Session 1Protected Areas: enhancing ecological effectiveness through appropriate designations & governance

Friday, July 4th 08:00 to 10:00 (B4)

Discussants

Henry Ufomba (Flinders University of South Australia)

Unpacking Inter-Scalar Dynamics in Mangrove Conservation and Restoration: Challenges and Pathways to Collaborative Governance

Syifa Afra (Universitas Indonesia)
Teguh Kurniawan (Universitas Indonesia)
Muhamad Imam Alfie Syarien (Universitas Indonesia)
Marcel Angwyn (Universitas Indonesia)

This article explores the challenges posed by jurisdictional and bureaucratic rivalries, as well as inter-scalar conflicts, that impede the effective implementation of Mangrove Conservation & Restoration (MCR) initiatives. It examines the complex governance landscape of MCR, where overlapping jurisdictions across coastal management, forest management, aquaculture policies, and regional planning can create tensions both horizontally (between different agencies) and vertically (across administrative tiers). Horizontal conflicts arise as agencies seek to assert control over their designated domains, while vertical conflicts emerge between local, regional, and provincial governments with differing priorities regarding mangrove development. Utilizing a process tracing methodology, the article investigates how these inter-scalar dynamics have evolved, identifying key events, decisions, and interactions that have shaped the trajectory of mangrove management in Banyuwangi. Process tracing allows for a detailed analysis of the causal mechanisms behind the moderation of inter-scalar conflicts and the identification of factors that have contributed to more cooperative governance. The article examines whether the reduction of conflicts can be attributed to collaborative governance strategies, such as co-creation and joint decision-making, which foster trust and coordination among various stakeholders. By tracing these processes, the article sheds light on how such mechanisms have contributed to the success of Banyuwangi's MCR efforts and the broader implications for improving multi-jurisdictional environmental governance.

Transitioning Protected Areas towards functional ecologically-representative systems: policy challenges and options in New Zealand

Valentina Dinica (Victoria University of Wellington)

The 1992 Conventional Biological Diversity and its implementation decisions include commitments by Member States to improve not only the land and marine coverage of Protected Areas (PA) but also the functional ecological representativeness of national PA networks. To ensure functionality, each native ecosystem type should be adequately (restored and) protected over at least 20% of its original cover, while considering potential impacts of climate changes. This study evaluates the policy-related challenges faced by New Zealand in meeting these commitments for the land-based Protected Areas.
The evaluation integrates multiple disciplinary and actor perspectives. First, it presents the findings of ecological studies regarding the over-representation and under-representation of native ecosystems in the largest network, managed by the government’s Department of Conservation. Second, it examines the legal, institutional and cultural settings that affect the current ecological performance of PAs. Third, it presents the findings of a nation-wide survey among public sector officials, scientists and Protected Area stakeholders,

regarding actor perceptions on the need for, priorities and approaches to such transitions. This includes analyses of survey results regarding the potential roles of scientists in transitions to more ecologically-representative and functionally-sustainable PAs.
These perspectives are integrated to discuss progress options and to articulate policy, institutional and law reform recommendations, to futureproof the persistence of native biodiversity, by using PA as key policy tools.

(Virtual) Monitoring and evaluation of service concessions for supporting visitation in Brazilian national parks

Grislayne Lopes (University of São Paulo (Brazil))

This research focuses on monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices in the service concession for supporting visitation in Brazilian national parks (NPs). This study is situated within the context of the federal government's environmental policy agenda, in which partnerships, through concession contracts between the public and private sectors, were established as one of the possibilities for providing services in public-use areas of NPs. These partnerships aim to stimulate visitation in contact with nature, with the potential to enhance natural and cultural heritage, promote local socioeconomic development and democratize access to protected areas (PAs). However, this agenda has drawn criticism from society due to its advancement amidst shortcomings in institutional governance, limitations in planning and management of partnerships, difficulties in monitoring contracts and effectiveness of public policy. Given this scenario and considering that M&E practices are incipient in the context of Brazilian public policies, this study aimed to analyze M&E practices in service concession for supporting visitation in Brazilian NPs, reinforcing that such actions enhance a quality standard of the provision of tourism and leisure services to society and contribute to achieving PAs' objectives. This exploratory study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining bibliographic and documental research with quantitative data analysis and content analysis of interviews conducted with specialists, public authority technical team (ICMBio) and concessionaires. It sought to answer the following questions: What M&E practices exist in public policy of concession? Are the resources and processes planned sufficient? What are the obstacles to implementing M&E strategies and tools in public policy of concession? The study identified existing M&E practices and tools in the NPs; investigated the M&E governance structure in concession policy; analyzed how the subject is addressed in seven national park concession contracts; and collected the perceptions of interviewees, observing causes and effects, based on components of resources and processes required to generate services and/or products, results and impacts. The study noted a lack of: effective guidelines within the institutional scope of the public authority; application of good governance principles; human resources and equipment for monitoring concession contracts, policy results and impacts; standardized contractual frameworks; and M&E plans, with indicators for monitoring and instruments for evaluating the results and impacts of public concession policy. It was concluded that integrating M&E practices into public policy of concession can generate evidence for informed decision-making, serve as a strategy for institutional learning and identify problems requiring solutions. Furthermore, it strengthens transparency and accountability from both public and private sectors to stakeholders. It is suggested that the public sector initiate discussions and develop M&E practices for concessions, incorporated into a broad and innovative national M&E policy for SNUC, integrating all M&E systems and tools of PAs. Contributions of this study include bridging the fields of tourism, environment and M&E of public policies, as well as systematizing information to support M&E in public policy of concession. Thus, this study fits with the panel's research as it addresses the evaluation of a public policy in protected area, highlighting the importance of M&E concessions in national parks.

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Chair : Valentina Dinica (Victoria University of Wellington)

Session 2Protected Areas: Participatory governance & implementation perspectives

Friday, July 4th 10:15 to 12:15 (B4)

(Virtual) Regulatory Governance and Participation in the District Conservation Unit System (DCUS) of the Federal District, Brazil

Jessica de Oliveira (University of Brasilia, Brazil)

Marcos Tito (Center for Sustainable Development/University of Brasília)

Andre Cunha (Universidade de Brasília)

The District Conservation Unit System (DCUS), known in Portuguese as the Sistema Distrital de Unidades de Conservação (SDUC), established by Complementary Law No. 827/2010, is a set of protected areas in the Federal District, Brazil, aimed at protecting biodiversity and natural resources. It promotes sustainable use, social participation, environmental education, scientific research, and the restoration of degraded areas. Additionally, the system seeks to enhance the region's natural and cultural resources, consolidating a legal framework for local environmental conservation. However, despite its importance, the DCUS faces challenges related to its implementation, management, and participatory governance. This research aims to analyze the evolution and challenges of the DCUS, with a particular focus on regulatory governance and the role of public, private, and civil society actors in the system's development and management. The central research question is: how have regulation and governance processes influenced the design and management of the District Conservation Unit System (DCUS) in the Federal District, Brazil? A qualitative approach will be employed, using a case study as the investigation strategy. Data collection will involve document analysis (e.g., meeting minutes, legislative bills, public actions) and in-depth semi-structured interviews with actors involved in the creation and management of the DCUS. The collected data will be categorized using content analysis, with special attention given to the legislative process of Complementary Law No. 827/2010, exploring the inspirations, motivations, and levels of influence of the system's key formulators and implementers. The expected results aim to highlight gaps and opportunities in the DCUS's management model, contributing to the improvement of mechanisms for participation and regulatory coherence. This study aligns with central themes of the panel by exploring the interaction between environmental regulations, social participation, and the effectiveness of public policies for protected areas. In this context, the experience of the DCUS provides insights into the challenges of decentralized environmental governance in metropolitan regions. Additionally, this research contributes to understanding how historical and contemporary scientific paradigms shape nature policies, protected area designations, and regulatory frameworks. By examining the formulation and implementation of the DCUS, the findings help contextualize the role of legal frameworks and stakeholder dynamics in balancing conservation goals and sustainable use, enriching the debate on adaptive and participatory approaches to environmental governance.

Securing customary tenure rights of indigenous and local communities in the protected areas of Cambodia through policy and practice

Antoine Deligne (GRET, France)

Natalia Scurrah (RCSD, Faculty of Social Science, Chiang Mai University)

The paper will discuss the lessons from the Mekong Region Land Governance project (MRLG) in supporting policy and practice change to strengthen the land and resource rights of communities affected by the expansion of protected areas (PAs) for conservation and climate change mitigation. Cambodia has designated about 38% of its territory as PAs without any form of consultation with the communities living in and nearby those areas. Indigenous people have lost access to spiritual, shifting-cultivation and forest land

that they customarily used. This dispossession has created strong incentives to encroach in PAs for short-term benefits and discouraged collaborative approaches for conservation purpose.

MRLG has established an alliance of stakeholders – including conservationists, CSOs, indigenous organizations and researchers – to reflect on the main issues faced by communities in PAs and develop strategies to influence related policies and practices to strengthen community rights to land and livelihoods. The alliance has promoted the concept of customary tenure to: 1) advocate for community rights within environmental legislation, and 2) develop tools for engaging communities in a Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) process to inform the zoning of PAs.

A review of the lessons learned highlights the value of multistakeholder approaches, leveraging research and evidence to feed policy dialogue, collaborative strategy design and monitoring, multi-level government engagement, learning from neighboring countries, and continuously adapting strategies in response to contextual changes. While these principles have been effective in building a strong coalition, the actual changes have been limited due to the governance context of the country, its complex political economy, the unpredictability of policy development processes, etc. The implementation of FPIC by conservation NGOs provided more promising results compared to policy level discussions. Ultimately, however, efforts to address the question of community land rights through a more inclusive process also came up against powerful interests and excluded a community-based conservation group deemed to be too ‘radical’ by the Ministry of Environment.

Besides modest victories, the challenges faced reflect the lack of progress on more substantial and persistent issues: the influence of powerful families and cronies who consolidate large estates over natural and community areas and the logic of patronage systems within the government and ministries that prevent accountability and incentivize the search for personal benefit over the public good. These logics are well described in multiple scholarly works and continue to drive environmental destruction across the country.

In such a context, we explore the significance and nature of policy change, incremental versus transformative, and confront a difficult question: Is there value in policy engagement and in maintaining the role played by international and national stakeholders to challenge the status quo? Should the policy arena be abandoned as hopeless, or worse, are these engagements legitimizing exclusionary processes? Or should we continue engaging and use international pressure on Cambodia to respect its international commitments such as the social safeguards attached to climate change action?

Stakeholders’ perception of the implementation of logging prohibition in National Parks and the protection of endangered flora (Pterocarpus Erinaceus) in Nigeria

Henry Ufomba (Flinders University of South Australia)

Deforestation and forest degradation as a result of illegal logging are the prime drivers of the loss of biodiversity in Nigeria. As of 2024, Nigeria has lost over 90% of its forest areas. In response, using the framework of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Nigerian government established National Parks for the conservation of biodiversity with strict prohibition on logging and imposed CITES certification requirements for the export of Pterocarpus Erinaceus (Rosewoods). However, data from the Nigerian Federal Ministry of Environment revealed that from 1990 to 2020, the protected forest areas (PFAs) in Nigeria reduced from 10% to 6% of the country’s landmass, also Nigeria remains the biggest source of illegally logged endangered Pterocarpus Erinaceus in Sub-Saharan Africa. This signifies regulatory failure and the ineffectiveness of the PFAs to limit access to forest resources and conserve the biodiversity within it. Armed with this observation, this study addresses the panel question- How to better incorporate contemporary scientific insights in the reform of nature policies and Protected Areas (PA) designations and the regulation of human access, for more ecologically effective PA systems? To answer this question, we surveyed 221 stakeholders of the Old Oyo National Park in the Southwestern region of Nigeria, which was followed up with 22 in-depth interviews. Additional data was drawn from secondary sources. The findings of this study reveal that forest officers' use of discretion, influenced by limited resources, insecurity, prebendalism, and corruption, often undermines regulatory effectiveness. The key findings further reveal that loggers’ compliance with logging regulations is inconsistent, and enforcement of penalties often lacks a deterrence effect. It is therefore important for policymakers to mitigate these constraints through interventions at the policy, organisational and individual levels to initiate a positive impact on regulatory outcomes and forest sustainability.

(Virtual) Enhancing Competences for Effective Management of Protected Areas in the Brazilian Federal District

Marcos Tito (Center for Sustainable Development/University of Brasília)

Jessica de Oliveira (University of Brasilia, Brazil)

Andre Cunha (Universidade de Brasília)

To manage the 83 protected areas under its jurisdiction in the Federal District of Brazil, the Instituto Brasília Ambiental (IBRAM) relies on 93 employees affiliated with the Superintendence of Protected Areas (SUCON). Together, these protected areas cover approximately 34% of the Federal District's territory, resulting in a ratio of one SUCON employee per 2,115 hectares of protected land. This scenario imposes a significant burden on employees, who hold analyst and technician positions in the fields of environmental management, urban planning, infrastructure, public policy, and governance. District Law No. 4.302/2009, which established positions related to environmental activities, defined the eligibility criteria for these careers but failed to specify the duties and responsibilities of each position. This gap was only partially addressed 13 years later with the publication of District Decree No. 41/2022, which still provided incomplete guidelines. As a result, there is a significant overlap of functions and responsibilities among employees in different career tracks. Additionally, salary disparities of up to 61% between analysts and technicians exacerbate a sense of disharmony in the workplace, hindering team management and performance. The research was driven by the following central question: What are the essential competencies for the effective management of district protected areas? To identify gaps, redundancies, and excessive workload in competencies associated with the management of protected areas within IBRAM, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 22 SUCON employees (including directors, advisors, and department heads) directly responsible for decision-making. These interviews, held between May and June 2024, combined open-ended and closed-ended questions. The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative approach, focusing on the administrative and technical competencies of IBRAM employees. The evaluation began with the mapping of 420 technical competencies listed in the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) competency framework (Appleton, 2020) against the different job categories within IBRAM. In a second stage, the 1,340 individual technical competencies defined by the General Coordination for Human Resource Management (CGGP, 2023) of ICMBio—the federal agency responsible for protected area administration—were analyzed and linked to IBRAM units, differentiating them by type of activity. Based on the interview findings and comparative analyses, proposals for the essential competencies required for the effective management of district-level protected areas were developed. These proposals were presented and validated with SUCON employees to support the revision and expansion of legal frameworks governing job roles and career structures. Additionally, the study aimed to strengthen biodiversity conservation efforts carried out by IBRAM, aligning them with Target 3 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (CBD). The exposition of this research seeks to contribute to the debate on enhancing patterns of policy leadership help initiate and sustain successful transitions towards ecologically-effective PA systems, in multi-level governance systems.