

## Policy coherence in fisheries and aquaculture – possibilities and constraints

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- **“Do as I say and not as I do!”**  
OECD – between political ideals and “realpolitik”  
A balanced approach:
  - the merits of policy coherence
  - the pitfalls of too simple perceptions
  - A balancing act between TINA (*There Is No Alternative*) and TATIANYA (*There Are Truly Interesting Alternatives Not Yet Acknowledged*)



- What is “policy coherence”?
- According to OECD (2005): “In its broadest sense, coherence implies an overall state of mutual consistency among different policies”
- Forster and Stokke (1999) are more precise:
- Three levels of ambition:
  1. policies should be *supportive* of each other,
  2. they should *not be conflicting*,
  3. decisions regarding policies should, if conflicting, *be made in an open and transparent manner* where possible negative effects are mitigated.



- According to Hernes (1978) we can operate with four different steering systems:
- **Markets**, where steering takes place through autonomous self-regulation and individual adaptations
- **Hierarchies**, where responsibility for coordination is placed in an administrative apparatus
- **Polyarchies**, where responsibility is located in democratic institutions, based on representation
- **Negotiations between organised interests**, where distribution of scarce goods is the result of negotiated compromises between the interests involved.



- In the “real” empirical world we will seldom face the choice between pure systems, instead it is a question of what is the optimal mix and what type of goods and services are best (and most legitimately) distributed through the various systems.
- Anomalies or steering problems are to a large degree created by perversions of one or other steering system.
- Perhaps “policy coherence” is not quite as new as often suggested?
- Lessons to be learnt from previous work?



- What’s the problem?
- According to OECD (2005) four types of policy incoherence problems:
  1. Lack of policy coherence within a given sector policy (e.g. small-scale vs industrial).
  2. One sector policy is counteracted by policy intervention implemented by another sector.
  3. International development politics versus national sector policies (trade, agriculture, industry, services, etc.).
  4. International treaties where various countries continue to follow national or sector policies that work against the primary goals of the agreement.



- **What is the setting?**
- **30 million fishers, of whom at least 22 million are engaged in small-scale fisheries.**
- **If the fisheries-associated livelihoods, such as marketing, processing and auxiliary industries are included some 88 million people are dependent on small-scale fisheries.**
- **Adding family members as many as 150 million may be dependent on these fisheries.**
- **Few countries with a GDP contribution by the fisheries higher than 5%. Of the ten countries on the list, five are small island developing states (SIDS), while the remaining five comprise Namibia (7.5%), Bangladesh (7%), Ghana (7%), Senegal (7%) and Vietnam (6%).**
- **Hence, on a national level, fisheries, including aquaculture, are normally not considered among the most important economic sectors. Greater importance on the regional and local levels**



- **In spite of more than 5500 fisheries development aid projects, *trade* more important than *aid***
- **50% of world trade in fish from developing countries, mainly small-scale**
- **Fish more important than many agricultural cash crops, BUT:**
- **The connection between fisheries development and poverty alleviation not as clear as anticipated**
- **Difficult to reach the "poorest of the poor"**
- **(Are they poor because they are fishers, or fishers because they are poor?)**
- **Need for new strategies in fisheries development**



- **Where are the main problems?**
  1. **Internal consistency; reducing subsidies, improved allocation schemes (ind. vs artisanal)**
  2. **Fisheries in conflict with agricultural policies, industrial policies, tourism, environment etc. The need for Oceans Policy!**
  3. **Development policies in conflict with agricultural and trade policies (difficult trade-offs)**
  4. **Better consistency with treaty obligations, BUT cause-effects relations often unclear (e.g. MPAs)**
  5. **NEW problems due to new strategies of poverty alleviation (sustainable livelihoods) and requirements for ecosystem approach to fisheries**



- **Who is to blame?**
- **According to OECDs (2005) four basic causes:**
  1. **Lack of policy coordination.**
  2. **Inadequate decision making**
  3. **Political decisions**
  4. **Lack of information and understanding**
- **Perhaps not very revealing?**
- **Not all decisions regarding "incoherence" are made from shortcomings or stupidity.**
- **Institutionalised compromise/ the "cost" of stability**
- **When changes are brought around : a result of the better argument but most often a result of a larger threat – the threat of being penalised economically.**



- **What are the gains?:**
  - 1. Improved performance (better results, results according to plans and projections),**
  - 2. Better use of scarce economic (and manpower) resources,**
  - 3. Increased political legitimacy on behalf of government authorities on various levels.**

**(and the possible losses)?:**

- **When efforts are larger than gains**
- **Back to the planned economy?**
- **Some degree of policy incoherence = the cost of democracy?? ("the winner does not take it all!")**



- **What is a realistic approach?**
- **"Charity begins at home!" (internal sector improvements)**
- **Increased focus on agricultural and trade policies**
- **If WTO too slow to improve present imbalances, bilateral FTAs?**
- **More coordinated efforts of international organisations (FAO, WB, IMF, OECD)?**
- **Continued efforts on critical reviews and advice**
- **Stronger efforts in research and education (reaching the next generation of politicians and administrators)**



- **A precautionary warning:**
- **Policy coherence most often seen from a sector perspective (fisheries, environment, trade etc).**
- **Politics on central level characterised by *compromise*=institutionalised policy incoherence**
- **Policy coherence requires clear and consistent goal hierarchies. Is that a realistic assumption?**
- **50 years experience of implementation studies: politics continue after decisions have been made.**
- **Only administrators and academics like unambiguous goals and clear hierarchies!**



- **March and Olsen (1976) pointed out that:**  

“The problems of ambiguity in organisations are conspicuous. Nevertheless, the literature on organisational learning is rarely uncoupled from the idea that learning is adaptive. Experience is viewed as producing wisdom and improved behaviour. For purposes of studying experimental learning under ambiguity it is necessary to relax on such an assumption. Modern organisations develop myths, fictions, legends, folklore, and illusions”.
- **Some scepticism regarding institutional reforms**
- **What is only ritual and form (hypocrisy)?**
- **Quantifiable indicators to attract public interest**
- **Good case studies to understand the dynamics**



- **After all this scepticism, any hope for a better future?**
  - + increased interest for policy coherence
  - + increased amount of information
  - + increased speed of information
  - + new combinations: NGOs+markets+authorities
    - rapidly changing agendas
    - strong lobby groups
    - public indifference (fish not a priority!)
- **Still a role for the focussed work on prioritised issues (OECD, FAO, UNDP, WB, academic inst.)**
- **The importance of the better argument!!!**

