

K4D International Nature Learning Journey

Session 6: Mainstreaming Nature: Institutions, Capacity and Evidence

09:00-10:15 Wednesday 4th August 2021

Ruth Davis, conservationist, writer and environmental advocate: *Global commons, ecological complexity and local meaning*

- We must be prepared to live with and accept complexity and contradictions if we're going to be true to the realities of the challenges we face. The relationship between the global commons and the extreme complexity of ecological systems and local meaning is key. Many of these issues are very locally specific, because of both situation and also meaning. Meaning really matters in this conversation.
- It is important to remember that in these discussions we're talking about nature not biodiversity. When talking about biodiversity, we are talking about a scientific definition. For many people 'nature' encompasses all of the natural world, with moral, aesthetic and cultural connections. 'Nature' is less bounded.
- We are trying to juggle very different scales of issue when dealing with mainstreaming, which is a huge challenge.
- people value in their landscape is very culturally contingent. National parks in the UK and across the world can be extremely culturally controversial because they're sometimes perceived to be untouched wildernesses but in reality, many have been the home of First Nations and Indigenous populations.
- What is 'mainstreaming'? Mainstreaming is the process of making something start to be considered normal. So, how can we make it 'normal' within our institutions to value nature? Why is valuing nature not 'normal'?
 - Invisibility - We have little shared literacy about our cultural, economic and physical dependence on the natural world. Actors who benefit from the exploitation of nature are often distant from those who suffer its loss. Nature in some cultures and contexts is perceived to be infinitely abundant, renewable or replaceable.
 - Complexity – Definitions of nature are not bounded. Mainstreaming needs to operate at different scales. Ecology is complex and our understanding is imperfect. There isn't only one measure or policy tool we can adopt to 'solve' the problem.
- This is a classic problem of globalised, late capitalist society. Money, goods, services and people move around through global systems of trade and are governed by global institutions. But nature is grounded in time and place. We live in a world where we have to have rules-based global systems to avoid a tragedy of the global commons, but these systems are intrinsically unfit for purpose when applied to complex, locally specific problems. But invisibility and complexity must not undermine our sense of urgency. Imperfect solutions are preferable to fear, apathy or inertia.
- Some potential solutions include: thinking about institutional culture and not just policy; investing in ecological education, investing in understanding nature on the ground; recognising and accepting contradictions of scale; investing in 'Russian doll' taxonomies.
- Spatial planning is important because it is almost impossible to make positive changes in the natural world unless you know where things are. Think about local decision-

making, land rights and ownership. Sometimes this can mean having to work with putting lines on maps, which can be very controversial.

Jessica Skedd, Environment and Biodiversity Policy Officer, FCDO: Mainstreaming Nature: institutions, capacity and evidence case study

- The International Finance Corporation (IFC) is part of the World Bank Group which includes the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) among others. IFC is the largest global development institution focused on the private sector in developing countries. It does this by creating new markets, mobilising other investors and sharing expertise. It aims to create jobs and raise living standards, especially for the poor and vulnerable. The IFC's financial products include loans, equity investments and trade financing.
- The IFC environmental and social policy and standards include a sustainability framework, with eight performance standards which the client is required to meet. Performance standard 6 (PS6) is on biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of living natural resources. PS6 is considered a blueprint of best practices related to biodiversity for business. PS6 recognises that protecting and conserving biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem services, and managing living natural resources adequately are fundamental to sustainable development.
- The Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) is used to screen conservation and biodiversity value. This offers a one stop shop data search for anyone seeking authoritative, global biodiversity information.
- PS6 has largely been designed for projects with a footprint on the ground and a known supply chain, not really for donors who provide upstream finance. Challenges include lack of baseline data, limited data on species occurrences, and risks of development in the renewable energy sector.
- FCDO has been thinking about how to ensure best practices for the environment in their programming. FCDO's recently resigned programme operating framework has introduced a rule for climate and environment to ensure that it is considered in programming (PRoF rule 5). This includes strengthening requirements for environmental protection, which requires all programmes to align with the Paris agreement. In response to the Dasgupta Review, the UK committed to 'ensuring that all new UK bilateral aid spending does no harm to nature'.
- FCDO are also looking at how to work towards nature positive ODA – increasing the volume of ODA that achieves positive outcomes overall for people, climate and nature. The UK government is committed in the Integrated Review and the UK's response to the Dasgupta Review to investing in nature and a 'nature positive' economy. The UK has also committed to double international climate finance (ICF) and to spend £3 billion of that on nature.

Resources:

[IFC Performance Standard 6 \(2012\)](#)

[IFC Performance Standard 6 \(2012\) Guidance Note](#)

[IBAT \(Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool\): <https://www.ibatforbusiness.org>](#)

[UK response to the Dasgupta Review](#)

DISCUSSION:

Q - "Actors who benefit from the exploitation of nature are distant from those who suffer its loss?" Is this geographical or uneven distribution of impact from distortion of nature?

A – This is not always the case because sometimes the people who are exploiting nature are also the people who benefit from it and who live where they are exploiting it. Sometimes local people exploit nature in order to survive. Sadly, this exploitation creates short term gain with long-term negative consequences, and it reduces people's long-term assets. A combination of geographical and spatial division, but also distributional impacts.

Q - Spatial planning - do we take a landscape approach or use administrative boundaries? For either, who defines those boundaries?

A – You have to try to balance custom with certain ecological factors that tend to move you towards particular forms of planning. Customary organisation of communities and people matter, so it might be logical to not base it on ecological landscapes but to recognise the way that communities organise themselves.

Q - How binding are these international performance standards, is adherence to them monitored, and are there repercussions for businesses if they are not adhered to?

A – IFC supervise their investments annually through direct client interaction and clients are expected to demonstrate how they are adhering to and delivering the commitments set out in those plans and programmes. In terms of non-compliance, the IFC tries to work through with their investment teams to find solutions. Largely based on direct interaction with the clients, and funding is contingent on the commitments set out in the Biodiversity Action Plan and Biodiversity Monitoring and Evaluation programme.

Q – How do we approach issues where there may be local environmental damage, but positive overall impacts for climate change objectives?

A – This is something that many people are trying to grapple with, and wind farms in particular are a very contentious issue. With rapid development in the renewable energy sector, there are broader climate change net gains but local environmental damage which may happen as a consequence. The way to manage this is by having a better awareness of the risks and a need for a stronger understanding of the data on the ground and the likely impacts.

Q – We just heard biodiversity and nature are different, so what are the connecting points for how to approach both of these terms?

A – Nature is a term that you can use to have a conversation with a human being outside of the policy making or scientific community, and that makes it very powerful and important. Nature broadly encompasses the wider range of cultural values and potential connections to natural systems and living systems. Biodiversity is very specifically talking about the variation of life on earth.

Nature refers to the natural world with an emphasis on its living components whereas biodiversity is a very specific term looking at the variety of life in all its forms. There is a need to recognise the difference between the two terms.

CED is developing a nature core script for FCDO to help guide staff through the terminology and how to apply to our work. Aiming to be available early September. More information can be provided.

Q - What's our approach to non-ODA spending activities, particularly our diplomatic engagement? Should we be applying the equivalent of PrOF rule to what we choose to promote?

A – The PrOF rule applies to spending both in the ODA and non-ODA context but it's a programme operating framework, so it doesn't apply directly to diplomatic activity. However, FCDO are keen to make sure that they are integrating nature and biodiversity considerations across all activities, but there is no equivalent for the PrOF rule as that is directly for programming.

Q – Regarding the Department of Trade's work, what leverage do we have to shape the investments they promote?

A – FCDO are aware that they need to start thinking about this. There is a need to explore how to integrate nature into work strands.

This could be the next frontier of mainstreaming. We have to own a collective sense that our long-term security and prosperity depend on the protection of the global commons. It is relevant directly to our national security and prosperity, and is part of our commitment to the natural world and others around the world. This is where we have to go next.

Q – When we are looking at "net-positive", key questions seem to be "at what scale?", and "offsetting versus insetting". It seems like we need general rules (with scope for exceptions) rather than deciding on a case-by-case level, to avoid getting bogged down?

In the ProF rule specifically, FCDO are very much encouraging teams to carry out a proportionate approach, where they're only really expecting teams to be assessing their direct environmental impacts as part of their risk assessment, but they do also expect partners to be considering risks of all of their activities. We expect the legal requirement to consider environmental principles will start to be enforced by summer 2022, through the Environmental Bill.

The concept of offsetting is deployed in slightly different ways when we're talking about climate and nature, and it's important to find opportunities to distinguish those. The big challenge is avoiding using negative emissions as a substitute for all of the early heavy lifting that needs to be done around decarbonising the economy. In the nature space, here's an increasing recognition that there are some things that cannot be offset, such as irreplaceable habitats.

Q – What are the key messages that you'd want people to leave with today and to be engaging with others around this?

We might not have perfect solutions but that doesn't mean that they're not important to do. It's important to see nature and climate as interlinked as they rise up the agenda. We need everyone addressing these issues and tackling them with the solutions that we have at present.

Don't be scared of the complexity and challenge because we are doing something that is cutting edge, so mistakes should be expected. Mistakes can be learnt from.

This is not a journey that the UK is taking on its own, this is happening across the world. There is a lot of bravery in people from all different walks of life around this, to protect the things they love and value. Build links with other governments and other institutional structures within governments who are already ecologically literate and progressive. Consider whether there are ways in which you can share your learning on the ground with others and how can we come back together around this? There needs to be a stronger crossover of experience between business, civil society and people working in the government, so that we can build a wider community of learning.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

[K4D Learning Journey on International Nature course overview](#)

Session 6 detailed outline and videos:

[Mainstreaming Nature - Institutions, Capacity and Evidence](#)