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Workshop report

WP88 – From data to policy: supporting biodiversity policy needs and the SDGs

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Workshop aim

To present and test an approach for exploring linkages between policy indicators for biodiversity and ecosystem services, sustainable development goals and essential biodiversity variables.

Agenda

- 11:00 – 11:20 Introduction to the workshop (session aim, background, presenting hands-on exercise)
- 11:20 – 12:00 Working groups (hands-on exercise on linkages between indicators/EBVs)
- 12:00 – 12:25 Reporting back from groups + plenary discussion
- 12:25 – 12:30 Closing

Main results

The workshop had an estimated attendance of 30 participants, 27 of which took part in the hands-on exercise, in four smaller working groups (Figure 1):

- Group 1 – 6 participants
- Group 2 – 7 participants
- Group 3 – 7 participants
- Group 4 – 7 participants

The audience was mainly composed of researchers, policy officers, data (infrastructure) managers and collection managers.



Figure 1 – Workshop participants taking part in the hands-on exercise.

The general level of engagement and motivation was high, originating lively discussions during and after the hands-on exercise. The following insights could be captured from such discussions:

- The approach tested was generally seen as useful to support the work of the several organizations and processes, which deal with the indicators under analysis. In particular it was considered a) relevant to look at the links between Essential Biodiversity Variables (EBVs) and indicators; b) useful for “data people” to understand what the “indicator people” want.
- Some participants were of the opinion that the EBVs add an extra layer of information, which can become a barrier. They expressed the desire that the EBVs would be informed / shaped by the policy indicators (to be able to better support them). Related with this, a question for a specific indicator arose, namely how can EBVs support the Red List Index?
- It was stressed that integrating all the data underlying the indicators/variables analysed is very challenging.
- The issue of how “dated” are the data was raised. This is a particularly relevant issue for researchers (who often include data in a paper). There is a need for continuously updated data. In that sense, the “publish or perish” culture of academia makes little sense in face of policy needs. Related with this, changing data documentation over time was pointed out as a major challenge.
- Gathering and sharing data is associated with a motivation that is not necessarily associated or aligned with policy needs. It is important to understand what is the motivation to collect data, how can we shape that motivation according to needs (e.g. policy needs) and what options are available for improving data quality and knowledge sharing in this regard.
- High-level policy documents do not cite data properly. This hides the contribution of research / data structures and does not contribute to data findability.
- A possible limitation of the approach was mentioned, namely not taking into account the indicators used in the IPBES Global Assessment, which are explicitly linked to Aichi Targets.
- It was suggested that, as complement to the conceptual linkages identified in this exercise, it would be useful to look at linkages via the data.

Due to time constraints, it was not possible to conduct the hands-on exercise in its full extent. As this was anticipated, the main aim was to give participants a flavour for what the task entails in order to provide food for thought for the discussion. Nevertheless, two of the groups were able to summarize their results in flipcharts (Figure 2). Since these were partial results, they are not further discussed here and are shown only as illustration of the outputs of the hands-on exercise.

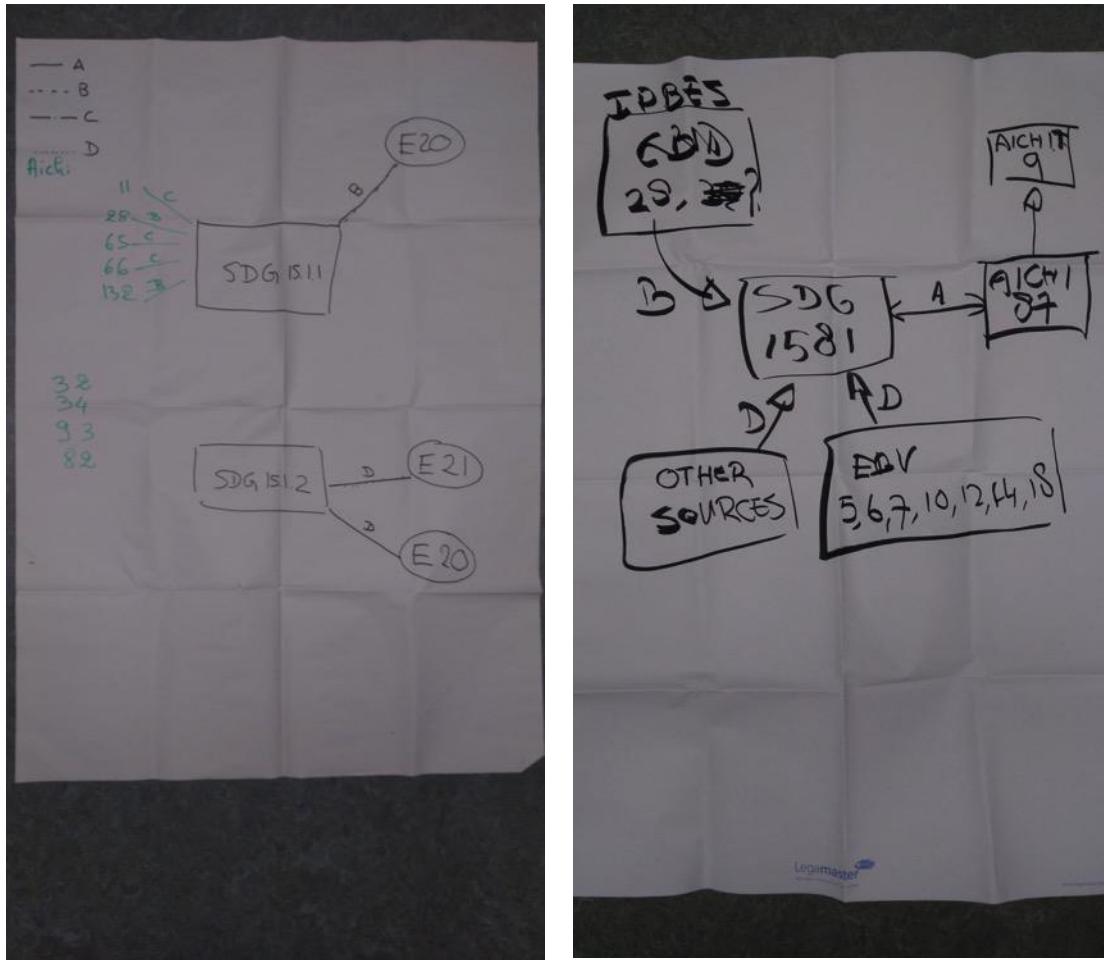


Figure 2 – Resulting flipcharts from hands-on exercise of two working groups.

Outlook

The workshop has shown that the hands-on exercise is feasible, provided that there is more time available to conduct it. The general level of interest from participants provides motivation to find further opportunities to conduct the exercise. Future efforts can capitalize on synergies or joint work with participants, which was made possible through the workshop.