How do arguments differ at different levels of governance?

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Multilevel governance

Horizontal governance structure

Vertical governance structure

Distribution of authority towards non-state actors, transnational cooperation between governments, interactions between stakeholder groups, multi-actor coalitions and issue networks

Decentralised authorities, participation of (sub)national actors in EU decision-making, implementation of EU directives into national legislation, NGOs operating at multiple scales
Comparative study

Global scale (CBD and strategic plans)

EU scale (Biodiversity Strategy)

National politics

Public Administrations

Civil society Organizations
Global/EU levels

Global level policies:
- The Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)

EU level policies:
- The EU Biodiversity Strategy (1998)
- The EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 (2011)

→ Which types of arguments are used? (governance levels)
→ What are the changes of arguments over time? (time scales)
**Figure 1: Comparison of arguments at different governance levels and timescales**

- **Precautionary principle**
  - Nineties: Wide range of arguments: utilitarian & non-utilitarian
  - Recent: Precautionary principle

- **Ecosystem Services (ES)**
  - Nineties: Social arguments based on equal access and benefit sharing
  - Recent: Ecosystem Services

- **Value of biodiversity for ES and human wellbeing**
  - Nineties: Wide range of arguments: utilitarian & non-utilitarian, partly already based on scientific evidence
  - Recent: Value of biodiversity for ES and human wellbeing

- **Macro-economic arguments**

**Missing at EU level compared to Global level:**
- Social arguments such as the role of biodiversity in poverty reduction, enhancing peace, enhancing the position of women

**New in recent years:**
- Link between biodiversity and climate change
- Inclusion of term ES and link between biodiversity, ES and human wellbeing
- Inclusion of macro-economic argumentation
EU – national/regional levels
Implementation of EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020

CLAIM 1: Biodiversity is essential in order to progress towards a green and resource efficient economy.

1A Biodiversity delivers ecosystem services that underpin our economy.
1B Action to halt biodiversity loss requires money

Flanders  England  Netherlands  Finland, Hungary, Poland, Germany, Wallonia
Pilot: Flanders
“Deep cases” of conflict and dispute

Layers of argument

- **Products**: What arguments “say”
- **Transactions**: What parties “do” with arguments
- **Networks**: How arguments “fit” into the social-institutional
Public controversies surrounding the return of red fox and wild boar to Flanders
“Wild boars attack jogger with dog”
Discussing the “facts” of the situation

I don’t believe the whole story!

Wild boars only attack when they feel seriously threatened!

Wild boars are very shy animals.

It is because they were so many that they were aggressive

The boar was probably frightened by the dog.

The dog ran through the forest without a leash.

They are and remain wild animals.

You didn't read well: the dog was on the leash. Sad!

It is because the dog was leached that he could not run away.

I've never seen someone jogging with his dog on a leash.
Scaling up and bringing in the “principles”

1. Overpopulation should be reduced.
   - It is the only viable solution.
   - Wild boars are dangerous.
   - Farming should build fences.
   - We need to help nature achieve balance.
   - Farmers should build fences.

2. Responsibility cannot be assigned to forest owners.
   - It is not practically possible to avoid damage to neighbours.
   - You never know who's boar it is that caused the damage.

3. Nature must be able to keep itself in balance.
   - Nature in Flanders is not able anymore to keep itself in balance.
   - Who are we to judge whether or not a species belongs here?

4. Nature has already overcome a lot.
   - To claim that we know how to master the natural evolution reflects huge arrogance.
   - Learn to adopt to nature and not the other way round.

5. You only want nature that is made following your wishes. That is no nature but Poppaland.
   - You can travel 30 km a day and have no number plate.
   - We humans have injured, killed and even eradicated far more animals.

6. Every animal has right to live and exist.
   - Have those pigs the right to overpopulate our forests?
   - We can't just wipe out all wild animals that are a threat to us.

7. Man is still the most dangerous animal.
   - We humans have injured, killed and even eradicated far more animals.
   - Man is still the most dangerous animal.
Blaming governance

There is no longer nature conservation but nature fascism.

**Decision-making powers over natural areas are totalitarian and thus undemocratic.**

- Supports: Nature is systematically destroyed for the profit of so-called nature conservationists.

**Those nature boys want the whole natural heritage given back to nature, without taking account of people recreating outdoors.**

- Supports: They cross through the woods with expensive 4x4, equipped with nature design clothing, hung with expensive binoculars, and chase away the real nature lover, who is not coming to steal wood like they do.

**Nature areas have been made inaccessible (fences, gates), hikers and fishermen are regularly confronted with warnings.**

- Supports: Why shouldn’t the animals deserve some quiet places within our nature?

**Nature associations artificially counteract the tendency of species to find their own habitat.**

- Supports: I’ve never had any problems with this.

**They are the absolute ruler of vast natural areas, where they don’t (or hardly) allow non-members.**

- Supports: Wrong! They ensure that animals can be the absolute ruler.

**As long as man is not seen as part of nature such conflicts will remain.**

- Opposes: Changes in nature should be embraced, not suppressed.
Typical argumentation in controversy

Issues become defined in terms of fairness considerations (politisation)

Parties emphasise different facts and/or give different interpretations to them

Lack of shared view on what nature is about and how humans relate to it

Discussion on blame & responsibility

No agreement on facts

No agreement on principles