



PBL Netherlands Environmental
Assessment Agency

The whole-of-society approach in the context of the CBD. *Concepts and challenges at stake*

Marcel Kok

Programme lead International Nature Policy, PBL

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Outline

- My point of departure
- WoS in an international context

Beyond a CBD, major-stakeholder group perspective

- Non-state, sub-national action Agenda
- Global Review
- New imaginaries for global environmental governance



My point of departure

- Social scientist
- Working in an institute on the science-policy interface
- We combine long-term outlooks (model-based scenario-studies) on nature-positive futures with research on global biodiversity governance
- Challenged by the lack of progress in improving biodiversity/
- Interested in alternative mechanisms for global environmental governance, within and beyond CBD
- Especially from a bottom perspective
- Recognizing the collaborations this presentation builds on



Whole of Society (WoS) in international context

- Increasing attention to WoS as part from a shift from government to governance
 - *Classical multilateralism*: state-only, treaty-based, legitimate but slow and often ineffective.
 - *Polyateralism*: includes non-state observers but retains state-centric authority.
 - *Transnational governance*: non-state actors governing independently (companies, NGOs, certification schemes).
- In a 'state-centric', top-down perspective, WoS is taken on board as part of 'good governance' by governments.



From top-down to bottom-up approach of global e

- *'Groundswell of action', 'All hands on deck', 'seeds of change'*
- Whole of society, non-state and sub-national actors as agents of change within societies around the world
- Increase of non-state and sub-national action provides an opportunity for transformative change
- Need to build productive linkages between bottom-up and state-centric approaches
- *CBD has attempted to tap into this potential*



Non-state & sub-national Action-Agenda: assumed benefits

- Engaging more and more diverse actors in halting biodiversity loss;
- Provide a platform to showcase ongoing non-state and sub-national biodiversity action;
- Mainstreaming biodiversity into relevant economic sectors and across society;
- Building confidence for governments to adopt more ambitious biodiversity action, knowing that non-state and sub-national actors support this;
- Fostering innovative and experimental partnerships and initiatives breaking gridlocks;
- Providing governance functions that complement public policies
 - new standards and commitments, funding, creating and disseminating information, and executing projects on the ground.



Action-Agenda 2.0?

- Sharm El-Sheikh to Kunming Action Agenda for Nature and People
- Time for Action-Agenda 2.0?
- Revitalizing
- In cooperation with UNFCCC and UNCCD?
- Making sure its credibility is ensured, not perceived greenwashing

- As a follow up to the outcomes of the global review?



Whole-of-society in the CBD Global Review

- 2026 First Global Review, key lever for strengthening the effectiveness of the CBD, that should evolve into a permanent mechanism for collective responsibility and accountability
- While modalities have been agreed, it is still work in progress
- Commitments of non-state actors to the GBF have been invited, some of you may have submitted?
- We see relatively little recognition of possible contributions of WoS to GBF in national targets
- The CBD process so far very much fits the state-centric model of taking WoS on board
- Alternatively, we argue that the Global Review should be seen as multi-stakeholder, evidence-based and outcome-oriented process

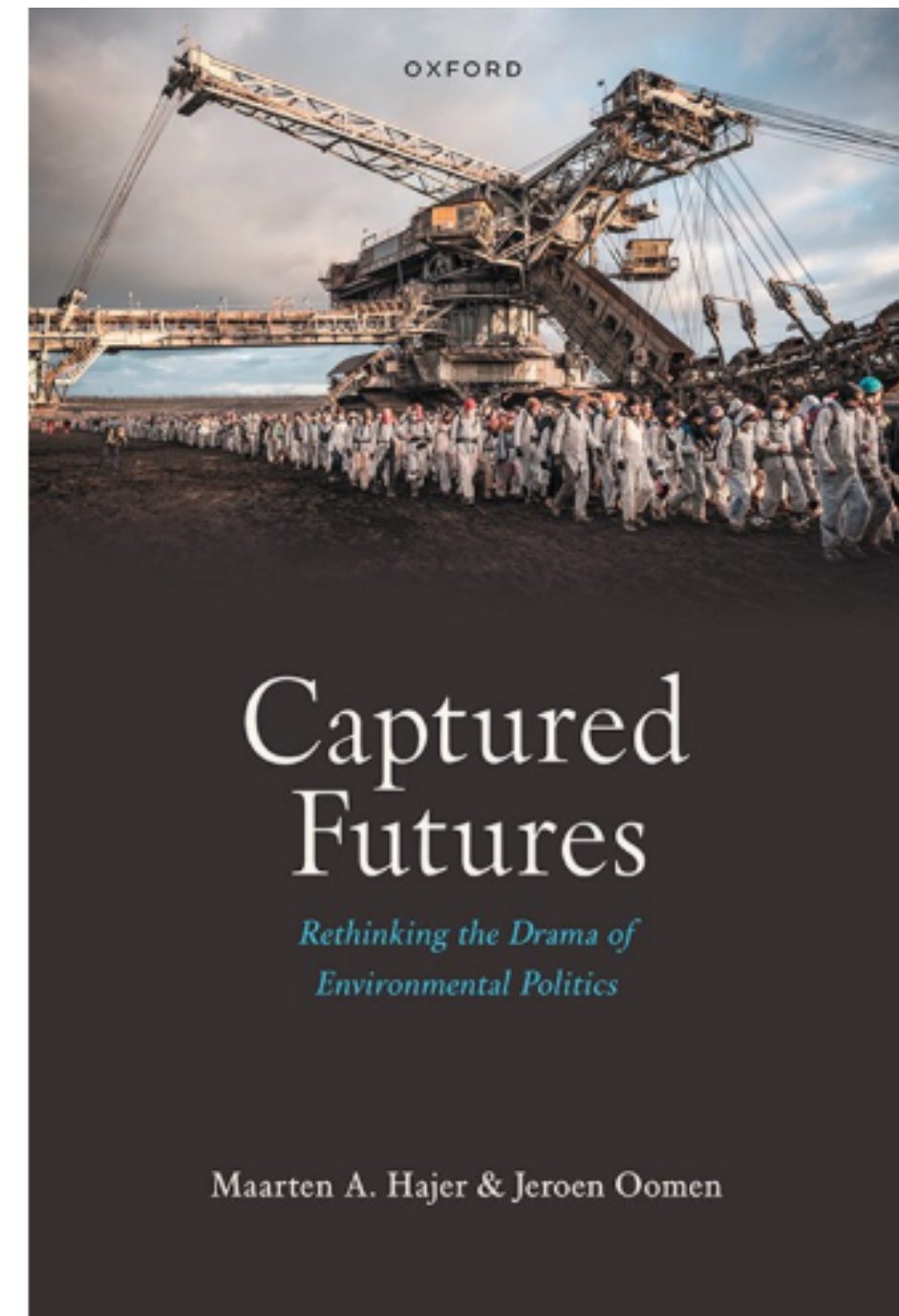


Opportunities to engage with Global Review

- ‘Shadow reporting’ next to the CBD global report on collective progress and fair shares in national contributions (distributive justice)
- “Action agendas” to mobilize actors around common targets, beyond Parties
- Contribute to technical dialogues
- Connect global review to national reporting processes
- Finding a balance between accountability and enhancing learning?
- Ultimately the Global Review will ask all involved to reflect on collective responsibility and cooperation for the ‘global good’
- Which raises fundamental questions of international cooperation

A need for new imaginaries for global environmen

- Effectiveness of multilateralism has always been an issue
- Recent geo-political turmoil does not make our work easier
- 'Environmental politics as we know it' will even have a harder time to deliver
- Hajer and Oomen (2025) argue we are unable to imagine futures that are meaningful different from the present





... and a need to rethink roles for WoS in a changing governance landscape.

- Hajer and Oomen ask uncomfortable questions about the roles we play and the scripts we use, and are all stuck with.
 - 'Scientists funnel narrow policy futures through their analysis'
 - 'Activists adopt politically expedient language'
 - 'Policy-makers look for safe win-win solutions'
- What would be a 'new' role for WoS in new modes of international cooperation? What are current practices we should get rid off?
- Implying different modes of cooperation, different implementation pathways, new coalitions, different forms of agency
- Within and beyond the CBD



Thank you for your attention!

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- Operationalizing the biodiversity Global Review to strengthen CBD effectiveness: priorities for COP17 and beyond (2026). J. Landry, M. Kok, R. Immerzeel, A. Hallosserie, M. Fofana, IDDRI/PBL.
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- Contact: marcel.kok@pbl.nl