

Case Report

Biodiversity Conservation and the Role of Policy Resources: The Case of Saint Helena

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Abstract: Biological diversity is declining globally. The current national environmental policies that many countries around the globe have adopted and are implementing have not halted biodiversity loss as expected. This is also happening in several European peripheral areas that constitute important “biodiversity hotspots” for the numerous species, habitats and ecosystems they host. Among these biodiversity hotspots, the Overseas Territories (OTs) of the United Kingdom (UK) represent important areas for academic investigation, particularly at this moment. The recent exit of the UK from the European Union will imply a net drop in financial contributions made available for the UK’s OTs. This adds to the limitations and constraints imposed upon those territories by their geographical isolation and small scale, as shown by the case of Saint Helena. The article provides insights on the role of policy resources in the analysis of public policies. It, then, focuses on biodiversity policy in St Helena under various angles: relations with the UK, organisational arrangements within the island, the legislative framework and its execution for the protection of biodiversity. Finally, the article discusses the major challenges faced in the development and implementation of Saint Helena’s biodiversity policy with an emphasis on the role of tangible and intangible resources. It concludes with a set of recommendations tailored around the specific case of Saint Helena but also applicable to other OTs.



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1. Introduction

Biological diversity is declining globally. The current national environmental policies that many countries around the globe have adopted and are implementing have not halted biodiversity loss as expected [1]. This is also happening in several European peripheral areas that constitute important “biodiversity hotspots” for the numerous species, habitats and ecosystems they host [2]. Among these biodiversity hotspots, the Overseas Territories (OTs) of the United Kingdom (UK) represent important areas for academic investigation, particularly at this moment. The recent exit of the UK from the European Union (EU) will imply a net drop in financial contributions made available for the UK’s OTs. This adds to the limitations and constraints imposed upon those territories by their geographical isolation and small scale that determine a limited amount of resources available for public policies, programmes and interventions.

The majority of the OTs (see Appendix A) are remote islands located in the Caribbean Sea, Indian Ocean, Pacific and South Atlantic, with small (or no permanent) population and surrounded by vast areas of ocean [3]. The richness of these areas in terms of biodiversity has been acknowledged internationally [4]. The UK’s OTs host numerous species that are found nowhere else in the world (“endemic species”) and unique ecosystems [3]. Furthermore, the OTs’ biodiversity supports many of the ecosystem services (ESs) that are pivotal for the local economies and populations (e.g., fisheries, water provision and tourism) as well as for climate change mitigation and adaptation [5].

Such richness is due to the geographical location and isolation of these territories. However, their remoteness and the small dimension also constitute important obstacles to

the management of biodiversity in the OTs. Although each OT is unique in its institutional arrangements and constitutional relations with the UK (Interview A), many OTs share similar challenges in the development and implementation of national policies and public programmes for the conservation of their biodiversity [3]. Because of their insular nature, small scale and geographical remoteness, the UK's OTs are also extremely vulnerable to climate change [4].

The competence for environmental matters, including biodiversity conservation, has been devolved to the governments of the OTs since the late 1990s. It is the government of each OT that develops environmental policies, legislation and standards, sometimes with the support of the UK government [5]. All OTs have adopted (and reformed) policies and legal instruments for biodiversity conservation; the UK has financially supported some of these reforms (through Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs or DEFRA) and various projects (e.g., under the Darwin initiative) [4]. The OTs have thus made significant progress in the designation of protected areas, the conservation of species and habitats, and the control of invasive species. The role of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) (in collaboration with public agencies) in such achievements is undeniable [4].

Despite these efforts, improvements are still needed. For instance, the last IUCN Red List of Threatened Species [6] identifies many of them in the OTs—either as vulnerable (Vu), endangered (En) or critically endangered (Cr) (Table 1). The main pressures on biodiversity in the OTs come from habitat loss (e.g., through development for tourism), invasive alien species (IAS) and climate change [5]. A high number of threatened species is found in Saint Helena (St Helena), which calls for an in-depth qualitative investigation on the causes of such degradation and the major constraints in the island's policy interventions.

Table 1. Status of endemic species in the UK and its OTs (the table does not list: (1) South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands; (2) and the two Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia).

	Vu	En	Cr	Total
Metropolitan UK	16	17	23	56
Anguilla	-	1	2	3
Bermuda	-	6	29	35
British Antarctic Territory (BAT)	-	-	-	-
British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT)	-	-	-	-
British Virgin Islands	1	4	4	9
Cayman Islands	1	16	18	37
Falklands Islands	-	5	-	5
Gibraltar	1	-	-	1
Montserrat	1	-	5	6
Pitcairn	16	4	2	22
Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha	39	49	71	159
Turks and Caicos Islands	2	6	2	10

Source: adapted from [6].

While the UK has strengthened its environmental objectives both in response to international commitments (such as those contained in the CBD and UNFCCC) and as a result of its own sustainable development targets, its OTs have faced several problems in the implementation of the international commitments undertaken by the UK government and the protection of their biodiversity. Most OTs are experiencing two major shortcomings: outdated or incomplete legislative and regulatory frameworks, and weak implementation and enforcement of existing laws and regulations [4,5,7]. This article investigates the case of St Helena.

St Helena is a small and isolated island in the middle of the South Atlantic, between Africa and South America. The island is located at 1930 km from Africa and 2900 km from South America. The nearest land is Ascension, which is 1125 km away [3]. It has an area of 122 sq. km for a population of 4500 inhabitants. Its marine environment supports marine life, both endemic and migratory species (e.g., humpback whales, whale sharks and

turtles), as well as resident populations of dolphins. The marine environment also supports recreational and commercial activities [8].

After this short contextualisation, the article clarifies the materials and methods used and provides analytical insights on the role of policy resources in the analysis of public policies. It then analyses biodiversity policy in St Helena under various angles (i.e., relations with the UK, organisational arrangements within the island, the legislative framework and its execution for the protection of biodiversity). Finally, the article discusses the major challenges faced in the development and implementation of St Helena's biodiversity policy with an emphasis on the role of tangible and intangible resources. It concludes with a set of recommendations tailored around the specific case study but applicable also to other OTs. Generalisation from the single case study of St Helena to other OTs is difficult (Interview B), yet the empirical data of this study will be put in the perspective of the existing literature on the UK's OTs.

2. Materials and Methods

Data were collected through document analysis and interviews with different stakeholders.

Initial useful information on St Helena came from UK governmental reports on the OTs (e.g., issued by DEFRA). Later, the official acts produced by the authorities of St Helena were analysed in relation to environmental policy in general and biodiversity specifically. These acts included both legal and strategic documents. Reports produced by international organisations, both intergovernmental (e.g., OECD) and non-governmental (e.g., IUCN), or under EU funding programmes (e.g., BEST) have also been used during data collection. Scientific literature in academic journals relevant to the specific case of biodiversity policy in St Helena could not be traced during our scanning of sources.

Different organisations were contacted for interviews from international territorial associations (Interviews E and F), national branches of international environmental NGOs (Interview A), British NGOs (Interview B) and governmental bodies in St Helena (Interviews C and D). In these organisations, most interviewees were "those at the top", i.e., key informants knowledgeable about the processes investigated in this study [9]. In other words, data collection has included "elite interviewing". Elite is defined as 'a group of individuals who hold, or have held, a privileged position in society and, as such [. . .] are likely to have had more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public' [10], p. 199. Interviewees were chosen for the position that they (had) covered. 'It is often the case that such individuals have unique experiences as "insiders", enabling them to comment upon events or evidence' [9], p. 85. Indeed, the purpose of this study was to investigate aspects of events and processes that only specific people would know about. Elite individuals are important repositories of unique experiences. A major problem in elite interviewing is that the interviewee(s) may have an interest in distorting the information provided. However, the information provided by elite interviewees was triangulated through cross-checks across the scripts of the different interviews and by means of other sources of data (namely documents and internet websites). This has strengthened the reliability of data collection and analysis.

3. Resources and Public Policies

Each stage of the policy cycle demands and relies on a set of resources understood here (as well as in the traditional policy analyses) as commodities (or means) of the political-administrative action to resolve a collective problem ("policy resources"). The availability of resources has a strong influence on the results of a public policy. Even before a policy is formulated, politicians, civil servants and private actors are confronted with limited, yet necessary, resources for the construction, production and execution of a public policy. Inadequate resource allocation may ultimately explain implementation deficits and gaps both in the outputs and outcomes of governmental action [11]. Indeed, the relevance of resources for successful policies has been stressed since the early studies on policy implementation [12] and regularly confirmed in the study of public policies [13].

The term “policy resources” (or “administrative capacity”) has been used to include a long list of physical and immaterial assets that are mobilised to form and implement public policies: funds, personnel, talent, organisation, appropriations, infrastructures, facilities, equipment, information, knowledge, leadership, political support, public consensus, time and many more [11,14]. For the purpose of this article, few resources were selected because they recurred as a concern and limit in public actions during field research: personnel, money and information.

Human resources (i.e., the personnel) are both quantitative and qualitative in nature [11] in the sense that personnel has to be understood as both the number of people available for a task (or size) and their talent (or skills) [13,14].

The importance of financial resources (or money) is very well clarified by the following quotation from Knoepfel et al. (2007) p. 69: ‘Without the finance to pay for salaries, accommodation, office and IT equipment [. . .] the effective implementation of a public policy is impossible.’

Finally, cognitive resources (i.e., information) refer to the knowledge based on technical, social, economic and political data and available to understand a collective problem and crucial for its solution. This is particularly true for environmental policies. The production and utilisation of this resource require the provision and management of sophisticated information systems; this, in turn, requires skilled users (i.e., expertise) [11].

4. Biodiversity Policy in Saint Helena

St Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha are three islands that form a single territorial grouping (and OT) under the Crown. A Governor for this OT is appointed by the Queen of England on the advice of the British government and resides in St Helena. However, from an administrative perspective, the three islands are divided into three separate entities; hence, the UK government appoints an Administrator on both Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha to represent the Governor. The Governor and the Administrators preside over a council that is locally elected on each island. St Helena has its own elected Legislative Council; it elects five members to sit on the Executive Council that advises the Governor in most policy areas [15].

4.1. Relations with the UK

Although the competences for biodiversity conservation and environmental management have been devolved to the governments of the OTs, the UK government retains responsibilities for external relations and international treaties [16]. The UK signed the CBD in 1992 and has since then adopted national biodiversity strategies in compliance with the Convention. The UK issued its first national biodiversity strategy in 1994 [17] and updated this strategic document in 2007 and 2012 [16]. The UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework of 2012 has responded to both the Aichi Targets adopted internationally in 2010 and the EU Biodiversity Strategy of 2011 [5].

Biodiversity in the OTs had been given little attention by the UK until 2001 when the UK government and the governments of each OT signed the Environment Charters that define a greater commitment (and financial support) of the UK to biodiversity conservation in the OTs [4]. With the Environmental Charters, the UK government has committed to help build capacity in environmental management, assist in the revision of environmental legislation, support the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, facilitate the use of expertise to advise decision-making, and promote cooperation among the OTs for the sharing of experience and knowledge [5]. The Environment Charters have marked an improvement of the UK’s involvement with the biodiversity of its OTs also because such commitment helped the UK government understand the biodiversity richness of its OTs as well as their need for support. The Charters were pivotal for the subsequent establishment of an environmental fund entirely dedicated to the OTs, i.e., Darwin+. DEFRA, too, started to be more involved with the OTs (Interview D).

The commitment from the UK was later confirmed by the “United Kingdom Overseas Territories Biodiversity Strategy” that the UK government adopted in 2009 [4,16]. The same UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework of 2012 aims at safeguarding biodiversity both in the UK and its OTs. Since 2016 the UK Overseas Territories have also enhanced marine environmental protection with support from the Blue Belt Programme (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-blue-belt-programme>; accessed on 20 July 2021).

The OTs have been an integral part of Britain’s history. Each OT is different, with its own history, identity and relationship with the UK. They all have very different institutional arrangements; each OT has its own constitution, government and laws (Interview A). Powers are devolved from the UK to the elected governments of the OTs; the UK retains only those powers that are necessary to exert its sovereign responsibilities. In this context, the governments of the OTs are responsible for the protection and conservation of their natural environment [3].

St Helena has self-determination and is administered by its own acts and authorities. Defence and Foreign Affairs continue to be the responsibility of the UK [15]. As for other OTs, powers have been devolved since the 1990s at the same time when environmental awareness was raised on the island. This seems to have eased St Helena’s own action on environmental issues (Interview B). Political support for the environment has been confirmed during field research (e.g., Interview D).

St Helena has had support from the UK but in a rather inconsistent way, at least in the past (Interview D). Although St Helena has revenues from taxes and sales and is pursuing financial self-sufficiency, an important amount of its public funding still originates from the UK [15]. Such dependence on the UK government for funding might limit the autonomy of St Helena in its political and policy decisions (Interview B). The policy priorities on the national agenda are established by the government of St Helena in collaboration with the UK government’s representatives present on the island (Interview B). However, the national political agenda is left to St Helena’s policy-makers with no interference from the UK government (Interview D). St Helena’s government budget (mostly coming from the UK) is shared among all government portfolios. The environment does not receive a large share since it competes with other national priorities such as education and health (Interview D). It follows that for the environment, the government of St Helena has to rely on project funding.

This project-based source of funding will face new challenges in the near future for two main reasons. First, St Helena can no longer access Darwin+ (dedicated to the OTs only) since 2020 because of a decision of the UK government. The island can now only access the Darwin programme, i.e., a grant scheme for biodiversity conservation and poverty reduction activities that target low- and middle-income countries (not only the UK’s OTs). This constitutes an important cut to the budget previously available to St Helena. Second, financial sources for St Helena will be impacted by Brexit since the island can no longer access funding schemes like the BEST initiative or the European Development Fund for the development of its infrastructure as it happened before Brexit (Interview D).

4.2. Environmental Governance in Saint Helena

A Chief Environmental Officer (CEO) is appointed by the Governor of St Helena. The CEO is responsible for the administration of environmental protection and oversees the implementation of the Environmental Protection Ordinance (EPO) adopted in 2016 (see below). The CEO also acts as the main advisor to the Governor on environmental matters [18]. Another key actor in the management of biodiversity in St Helena and the execution of the related administrative tasks is the Portfolio of Environment, Natural Resources and Planning (ENRP Portfolio).

The ENRP Portfolio has competence for a broad area that includes environmental protection and environmental risk management, biodiversity and nature conservation, land planning and building control, agriculture, fisheries and forestry [19]. The ENRP Portfolio regulates these matters, advise the government on policy developments in those areas, and

intervenes in case of breaches of the legislation through its monitoring and enforcement activities. It also aims at engaging the public in the areas of its competence [19].

As mentioned above, DEFRA has started to be more engaged with the OTs. Important support comes from the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) in the form of expertise and, occasionally, funding (Interview D). The public administration of St Helena can also rely on the support of UK-based NGOs (e.g., RSPB) (Interview D).

4.3. Saint Helena's Legislative Framework for Biodiversity

St Helena has never been subject to the *acquis communautaire* of the EU (Interview C). Its legal system is based on English law, but the island can issue its own legislation in the form of Ordinances (16). An Environmental Protection Ordinance (EPO) was adopted in 2016 and is the major legal instrument for the protection of the environment on the island (Table 2). It is also very comprehensive and includes the protection of biodiversity, the management of waste and the control of pollution (article 4, EPO 2016) (Ref. [8]; as confirmed during interviews: Interviews B and D). The adoption of EPO 2016 represents a major policy achievement in the biodiversity policy area in St Helena. Not much existed in the legal framework before this act. A number of legislative acts already referred to environmental matters (e.g., Birds Ordinance (1998) and Forestry Ordinance (2001)) but the EPO is the first consolidated text on the environment, which was the main objective behind the adoption of the law (Interview D). The Sustainable Economic Development Plan of 2018 confirms the St Helena's commitment to the effective management of its environment [20].

Table 2. Key policy documents related to the (marine) environment in Saint Helena.

1996	Birds Ordinance
2001	Forestry Ordinance
2003	Conservation and Management of Fishery Resources Ordinance
2003	Endangered Species Protection Ordinance
2012	National Environmental Management Plan (2012–2022)
2013	Land Planning and Development Control Ordinance
2014	Marine Management Plan
2016	Environmental Protection Ordinance
2016	10-Year Plan (2017–2027)
2018	Sustainable Economic Development Plan 2018–2028
2019	A Climate Change Policy for St Helena
2020	10-Year Plan Review

The EPO was the result of a strong community involvement (during policy formation), which can explain why its implementation has not caused any major conflict with the affected stakeholders (Interview B). The main obstacles in the implementation of EPO 2016 are the absence of regulations (that work like implementing measures of the Ordinance). Therefore, only some parts of the EPO are being implemented while others lack regulations. These implementing measures have not been produced because of the poor availability of human resources (for instance, for its drafting) (Interview D).

In the domain of biodiversity, the UK signed the Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992. Only a few OTs have requested to be included in the ratification of the CBD that took place in 1994; the other OTs are not legally committed to the CBD [4,5,15]. The CBD was extended to St Helena in 1994 [8,18]. However, a National Biodiversity Strategy (NBS) (as requested by the CBD) for St Helena is still missing due to the lack of resources. The NBS was never prioritised in the light of the (limited) amount of human as well as cognitive resources (i.e., expertise) available on the island (Interviews C and D). The island

has developed, instead, a National Environmental Management Plan in 2012 (Interviews B and C).

St Helena has recently established its Climate Change Policy [19]. This is a strategic document; the island does not have a legal act on climate change (Interviews C and D). The Climate Change Policy is, indeed, a programmatic document stating the government's intention regarding climate change. St Helena aims at reducing the quantity of greenhouse gas emissions by relying on renewable energies among other mitigation measures (e.g., sustainable transport and sustainable buildings). It also aims at identifying and prioritising current and future risks from weather-related hazards (on the adaptation side) [21]. In addition to this document, there is not any national law on climate change nor any adaptation strategy (Interviews B and D). A possible reason for the absence of such measure might again be found in the lack of adequate resources and skills (Interview D). There is both political and public support to address climate change and its impact but there are no legislative proposals at the time of writing (Autumn 2021). The same Climate Change Policy should have its implementation measures through a Climate Change Action Plan that has not yet been developed by the competent authority, i.e., ENRP Portfolio (Interview C; [21]). Nevertheless, climate change has been taken into account in recent policies such as the one on water management (Interview B).

4.4. Policy Instruments for Biodiversity Protection in Saint Helena

The EPO is the first and most important legislative instrument in St Helena for environmental protection; it seems to have had a positive impact on both habitats and species (Interview C). Indeed, the EPO's section on the conservation of biodiversity (Part 6) includes obligations for the protection of areas and species (articles 19–21, EPO 2016). It also includes provisions on IAS (articles 22 and 23, EPO 2016).

Protection of areas. According to the EPO (articles 30 and 31), National Conservation Areas (including MPAs) are designated by the Governor of St Helena; a management plan is then adopted by the CEO. Penalties for breaches to the management plan are foreseen as part of enforcement (article 33, EPO 2016). St Helena has a total of 23 National Conservation Areas: 3 National Parks, 6 Nature Reserves, 5 Important Wirebird Areas and 9 Historic Conservation Areas. The Nature Reserves and the Important Wirebird Areas cover 11% of the total terrestrial area [15]. In total, the protected area designated is 44% of the territory of the island (Figure 1). Such designation has implied a process of public consultation (Interview D).

However, management plans for terrestrial protected areas (falling under the remit of the Land Planning and Development Control Ordinance of 2013) have never been adopted (with the exception of one area); hence, they lack legal protection (Interview B). The production of management plans for the terrestrial protected areas remains a political priority; the main obstacle is the lack of resources for producing those plans. Unfortunately, around these areas there is a strong development pressure and, in the absence of management plans, some development projects have gone ahead. St Helena is a small island (as many other OTs); its land is thus under strong development pressure (Interview D).

Based on the EPO 2016, the government of St Helena has also designated a Marine Protected Area (MPA). St Helena's MPA encompasses the entire 200 nm maritime zone, which corresponds to 444,916 km² (Interview D). For the designation of the MPA, St Helena's Government (SHG) conducted an intensive process of public consultation and managed to have a good engagement of fishers and marine tour operators in the entire process [7] despite initial confrontations with the fishing industry (Interview A).

The MPA is managed under the Marine Management Plan (MMP) of 2016 with the objective of protecting ecosystems, habitats and species, preventing the introduction of non-native species and managing marine natural resources sustainably. The MMP 2016 indicates the major pressures on St Helena's marine environment: pollution (including the one coming from sewage systems), commercial and recreational fishing, alien species,

marine tourism, construction and mineral extraction [8]. The MMP represents the main strategic document for the marine environment of St Helena, thus going beyond the scope of the MPA (Interview B). The issuing of this document implied a broad process of consultation so that once it was in place, it did not meet strong opposition (Interview D).

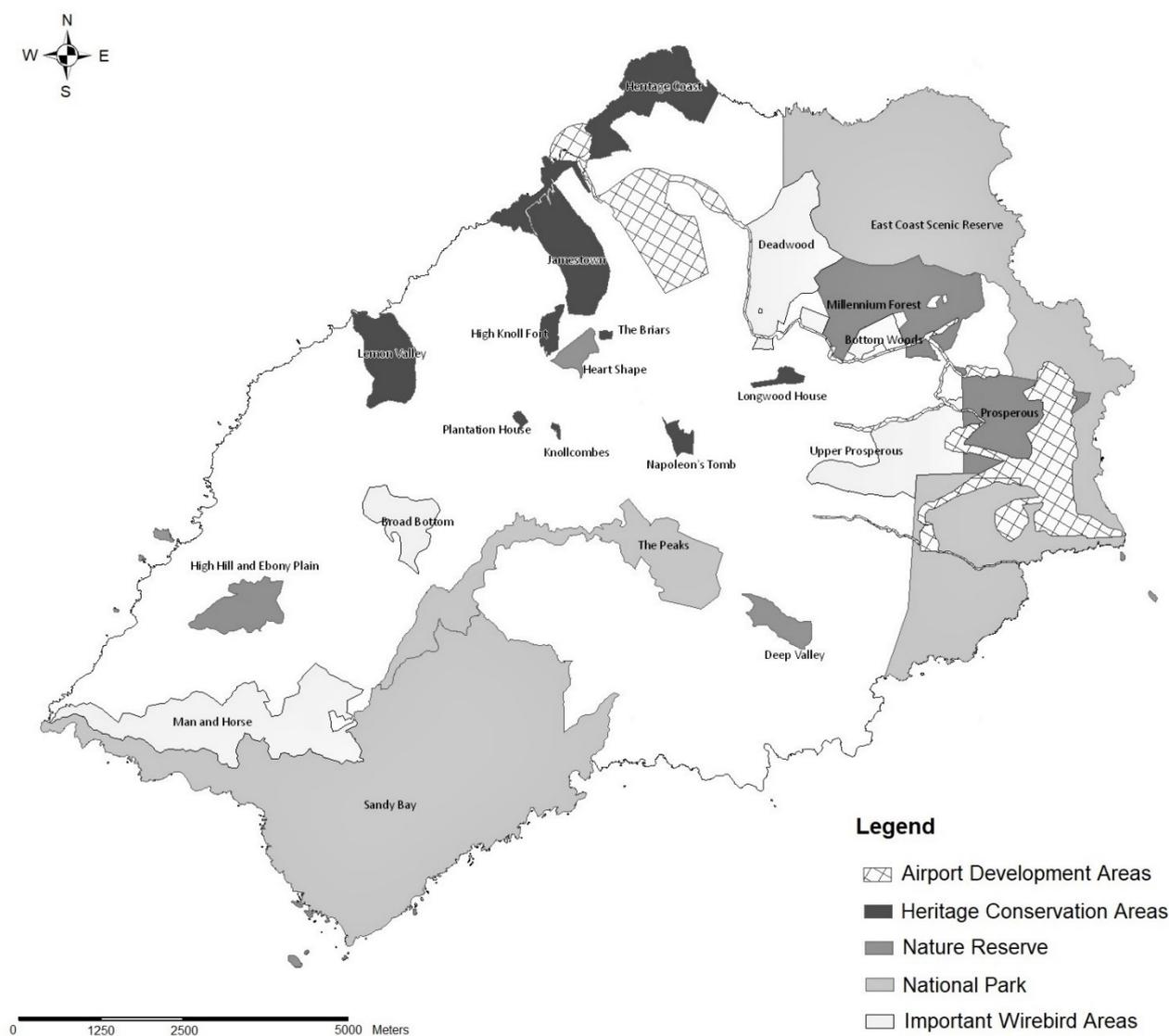


Figure 1. National Conservation Areas in Saint Helena. Source: Adaptation from St Helena's Government website (<https://www.sainthelena.gov.sh/portfolios/environment-natural-resources-planning/environmental-management/national-conservation-areas>; accessed on 21 December 2021).

For the production of the MMP, St Helena has received support (e.g., expertise and data to inform decision-making) from the UK's Blue Belt Programme (Interview D). The MMP 2016 is currently being revised and a new version should be issued in 2021 (Interview D). In the revision process, important inputs came again from the Blue Belt Programme (Interview B). The MMP is being updated based on contingent legislative progress in related areas (e.g., fisheries) and more evidence from the field (Interviews C and D). The MMP is developed and implemented by the ENRP Portfolio.

Protection of species. In general, the OTs have made significant progress in the designation of protected areas, the conservation of species and habitats, and the control of invasive species. The role of NGOs (in collaboration with environmental departments) in such achievements is undeniable [4].

The EPO of 2016 has certainly played a major role in the protection of species in St Helena. Indeed, the parts of the Ordinance that are implemented refer to the protection of species. Compared to previous laws (i.e., Endangered Species Protection Ordinance of 2003), the EPO protects many more species and establishes a schedule. In addition, action plans are in place for the protection of individual species (Interview D). Currently, all species that are classified as threatened on the IUCN Red List are protected under St Helena's law [15].

In St Helena, the result in terms of the protection of species is considered satisfactory. However, for many species, information is not always available or strong for informing management plans. The island has also put in place some restoration actions. IAS still remain an important threat to St Helena's biodiversity (Interview B and D).

5. Hindrances in Policy Development and Execution

The UK has strengthened its environmental objectives both in response to international commitments, such as those contained in the CBD and UNFCCC and as a result of its own sustainable development targets [17]. Its OTs, instead, face problems in the conservation of biodiversity and important hindrances in the implementation of the international commitments undertaken by the UK government. Although the OTs have different geophysical conditions and socio-economic contexts, most of them are affected by two common weaknesses: outdated or incomplete legislative and regulatory frameworks, and weak implementation and enforcement of existing laws and regulations [4,5,7]. The specific case of St Helena confirms these weaknesses. The empirical data collected on this case study point to resources as the main cause of such pitfalls in the political course of action during both policy formation and implementation.

5.1. Legislative and Regulatory Frameworks

Policy frameworks in many OTs are outdated, although—in a few of them—national governments and administrations have adopted new laws, developed new policies and improved the institutional arrangements to conserve biodiversity. In some cases, even when new legislation has been drafted, it has not been enacted [7].

In the specific case of St Helena, the island has adopted important instruments, i.e., a national law for biodiversity and a strategy for its marine area (both in 2016). Yet, it has not issued any legal act on climate change or a national strategy for biodiversity (to comply with the international obligations of the CBD). The same biodiversity law (EPO 2016) lacks implementing measures; management plans for most terrestrial protected areas have not been issued either. The reasons for these regulatory gaps need to be found in the prioritisation of public issues on the political agenda in the context of limited resources (Interview C). In other words, the public funding—that originates in large amounts from the UK—is dedicated to other issues than the environment such as health and education. In recent years, the airport project has also diverted political attention to other policy priorities (Interview C). As stressed by one of the interviewees, money is limited compared to the needs of the island and 'funding is linked to politics and what people decide to spend money on' (Interview B).

5.2. Implementation and Enforcement

The implementation and enforcement of existing political, legislative and regulatory instruments have been rather weak in many OTs due to several sources of conflict (both within the politico-administrative system and in relation with target groups) and the weak administrative capacity present in these islands [4].

5.2.1. Conflicts

In various OTs, administrative competences for biodiversity are dispersed across several departments; coordination among them is quite difficult [4]. However, this element could not be traced during empirical research on St Helena where administrative coordina-

tion is reported as good. The partnership approach with non-state actors also seems to be successful (Interview D).

Indeed, conflicts may also arise between the land-use and development objectives of some parties, on one side, and the work of conservation and environmental departments and NGOs, on the other [4]. The OTs' governmental bodies have limited resources also for communication and engagement, which prevents them from informing about their work, responding to people's concerns, and involving them in new public decisions and actions [7]. Environmental awareness in St Helena seems quite strong and has improved in the last couple of decades (Interview D). Here, policy development (e.g., the adoption of the EPO and MMP in 2016) has been possible thanks to an active community involvement that has solved initial frictions with some interests (namely fishers) on the creation of the island's MPA (Interviews B and A).

Nevertheless, like other OTs, St Helena suffers from its remoteness and size [20]. Biodiversity on the island is threatened by possible development projects. The area available for these projects is quite limited but the urge for the development of the population is quite high. The absence of management plans for terrestrial protected areas makes it easier for development projects to claim areas that lack legal protection (Interview B).

5.2.2. Capacity

Many OTs have small (and sometimes fragile) economies [5]. Therefore, they lack adequate human, financial and cognitive resources for monitoring and enforcement [7].

First, the size of environmental departments varies across the OTs but they are in general understaffed. Moreover, the small population of the OTs and their low geographical accessibility also limit the availability of technical expertise [5]. Even when technical positions are filled, the high turnover of staff easily deprive public agencies of skilled personnel and, ultimately, knowledge. All these elements negatively impact the administrative capacity of the OTs [7].

Second, financial resources are usually scarce and the contribution coming from the UK is often insufficient [5,15]. In addition, the OTs' constitutional linkages with the UK prevent them from accessing other funds (e.g., from the US). In this context, Brexit will put the other major source of funding represented by the EU in peril (Interview A).

Third, some OTs (namely the ones located in the South Atlantic) are affected by insufficient data available (Interview A): 'Species records across the whole of the South Atlantic are incomplete, both in marine and terrestrial ecosystems, regarding the identification and the spatial distribution of species, total population sizes, relative abundance and trends' ([15], p. 198). Filling this knowledge gap will be pivotal for better environmental management.

The limited resources have caused inefficiencies during policy implementation in St Helena, too, for instance in the management of its protected areas. On the land, only a few areas are currently protected in St Helena (as national parks or national conservation areas). Several places have been designated but management plans are still missing for most of them (Interview B). Management plans have not been issued because of the lack of staff and skilled personnel (with time to work on these plans) and funds to pay these people. Political will seems to be present, but the scarce availability of resources clashes, for instance, with the high number of species present on the island. In this context, conservation efforts are directed to the species most in need at a specific time without any long-term conservation planning (Interview B). In the seas, the existing MPA 'has been managed as best as it could possibly be given the resources that we have', according to an interviewee (Interview B). This is a general problem for environmental protection in St Helena: 'we do lack some funding and resources and expertise to put into these things' (Interview B).

Environmental NGOs (e.g., St Helena National Trust), partially compensate the local capacity for the protection of areas, species and the environment in general, and the actions that the government is unable to conduct. NGOs have channelled financial resources not only from UK-based foundations but also from EU funding programmes (Interview B). Again, Brexit is likely to have a negative impact on this last source of funding.

6. Conclusions

The paper has clearly shown that political and public support for biodiversity conservation is not sufficient to fuel the development of policy initiatives and their implementation. This is particularly true in disadvantaged territories such as the OTs of the UK. The analysis of biodiversity policy in St Helena has stressed the necessary nature of both physical and intangible assets such as human, financial and cognitive resources in policy formation and, even more, during policy implementation.

Similar to other OTs, St Helena needs more policy resources for the protection of its unique biodiversity. For instance, the personnel currently employed in biodiversity conservation in the national public administration is very small (Interview D). In this context, the UK's contribution becomes crucial, especially now that Brexit will take away EU funds from the OTs' budget (Interview B). The UK should, thus, confirm its past commitments to the OTs' biodiversity (as done in the Environmental Charters and the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework) and support capacity-building in its OTs through funding, training and cross-territory skill exchange [5].

Together with money and workforce, the case of St Helena has shown how scarce cognitive resources also can impact negatively on the making of biodiversity policies. Therefore, it will be important to reinforce the exchange of information and knowledge across the OTs by encouraging regional and cross-OT initiatives. Regional collaborations—through initiatives such as the UK Overseas Territories Conservation Forum—will enable the OTs to access a wider pool of expertise (Interview B). In the specific case of St Helena, exchanges with other OTs happen regularly and are formalised in a conference; in addition, an informal network brings together the OTs in the South Atlantic (Interview D). The UK should also enable its OTs to access expertise that is not available therein by building stronger linkages with academic institutions and nature conservation agencies in the UK and elsewhere [5].

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Appendix A. UK Overseas Territories

- Anguilla
- Bermuda
- British Virgin Islands
- Cayman Islands
- Falkland Islands
- Gibraltar
- Montserrat
- Pitcairn Islands
- Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha Island
- Turks and Caicos Islands

- Sovereign Base Areas of Akrotiri and Dhekelia
- British Antarctic Territory
- British Indian Ocean Territory
- South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands

(No population lives on British Antarctic Territory, British Indian Ocean Territory and South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands).

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