Changes in the Governance of Forest Resources

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Forests in the Global Balance – Changing Paradigms
IUFRO World Series Vol. 17
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Main drivers of the shifts in forest governance

• The variety of actors, the diversity of their interests and values, and the complexity of relationships between the actors have increased.

• Strengthening and political mobilisation of civil society at sub-national, national and global levels has taken place.

• Increasing global trade in forest products promotes trading relationships and the importance of multi-national corporations.

• Transnational actors are encouraging the adoption of new ideas and enhancing sustainable resource management.

• New modes of governance have emerged.
From old to new modes of governance (1)

Old governance

- the nation state steers society, defines goals, makes priorities
- command and control policy instruments dominate
- authoritarian decisions are often sub-optimal
- lack of trust inhibits interaction.

The limitations of old governance have become apparent as forest policy becomes more complex.
From old to new modes of governance (2)

New modes of governance

• the nation state loses steering capacity and compensates this by focusing on coordination among political actors
• there is new emphasis on interdependence, collaboration and policy learning among state and societal organisations.

New modes of governance pose new challenges that must be met if sustainable forest management (SFM) goals are to be achieved.
Forest policy goals and governance debates differ between countries

- **Industrialised countries with low forest cover:**
  - environmental sustainability
  - focus more on forest services than timber production

- **Industrialised countries with high forest cover:**
  - sustainable development
  - more polarized views

- **Developing countries with low forest cover:**
  - subsistence and poverty reduction
  - more consensus over policy objectives

- **Developing countries with high forest cover:**
  - economic development
  - forestry debates tend to have international links
Complexity is matched with new policy networks

- Policy networks are:
  - loosely coupled groups of private and public actors
  - mutually dependent in achieving their goals
  - exchange resources, especially information.

- Networks promote policy learning and build trust across diverse interests.

- Governance through policy networks is part of the general effort to empower civil society to regulate itself.

- Policy networks often have a coordinating and balancing role.
International forest deliberations

• International forest regime consists of:
  – legally binding agreements that focus on special subjects
  – non-legally binding instruments.

• International forest deliberations under the United Nations have resulted in over 270 proposals for action.

• Regional deliberations aim to develop operational definitions of sustainable forest management and a set of criteria and indicators for national level.

• Deliberations increase transparency and comparability among national forest policies

• Implementation of all proposals is based on nation states’ voluntary action.
NFPs are a practical realisation of network governance

• National forest programmes (NFPs):
  – are seen as the core piece of a legally binding instrument for implementing sustainable forest management at national and sub-national levels
  – are policy-planning instruments striving to render politics more rational, more long-term oriented and better coordinated
  – initiate an open-ended dialog process.

• Their guiding principles build on:
  – participation of relevant actors
  – adaptive and interactive learning processes
  – comprehensive, holistic and inter-sectoral coordination
  – decentralisation to facilitate implementation.
Through certification civil society governs itself

- Forest and timber certification are market-driven policy instruments created by independent or third party associations.
- They bypass conventional regulation and provide incentives for producers to practice SFM.
- Several competing certification systems are in use.
- Traditional governing capacities and network governance are still needed to support certification.
Decentralization supports interdependent bottom-up policy networks

- Decentralization is the transfer of powers from central government to lower political and administrative levels. It influences social processes in related institutional arrangements.
  - It is driven partly by the efforts to curb corruption and illegal practices in countries with weak governance.
  - Local authorities have better knowledge of local needs and can thus better represent local populations.

- Over 80% of developing countries and countries in transition are undergoing some form of decentralization.
  - A general problem is the lack of true empowerment and support for appropriate capacity building at the local level.
Devolution of public rights may improve effectiveness and efficiency of governance

- In the forest sector public-private partnerships (PPPs) involve partnerships of the central and local government with private companies, local communities and NGOs.
- Through PPP government maintains authority to create policy but delegates implementation to business and non-profit sectors.
- However, without appropriate oversight, the shift of power from the public to the private sector may result in a reduction of the quality of performance, loss of control over long-term processes and lack of accountability.
Self-organization is another important form of a bottom-up network

- Bad experiences with the nationalization of former community forests (common property regimes) have led to the renaissance of community forests in many developing countries.

- Well-managed community forests promise to make better use of the forest potential and to contribute to the livelihoods of the members.

- However, the success of revived common property regimes is often threatened by unsolved equity problems.
New forms of forest governance pose challenges to legitimacy

• Input legitimacy (referring to the rules of the game) is increased by all the new modes of governance.

• Output legitimacy (referring to the performance of the political system) is improved to the extent that network governance succeeds in dealing with the issues of complexity and rapid change.

• However, network governance also poses challenges to legitimacy because it is difficult to hold the actors of a policy network responsible if they fail to produce collectively accepted results.
Challenges for governments: from government to governance

- Effective policy networks may require a certain minimum of political-administrative capacity in order to function.
- Democratic accountability and the rule of law are important for network governance to work.
- Government involvement in network steering is based on its ability to harmonize key actors’ different interests, negotiate consensus, and retain ultimate accountability for achieving SFM goals.
- At the same time, governments have to be willing to devolve power and loosen their control over forest resources.
Policy design for new governance: states are finding new roles

Even if forests can no longer be governed in the old way, governments have key roles to play as:

- conveners and facilitators
- sources of expertise
- providers of finance and other resources and in ensuring accountability and transparency.
There is no blueprint for good governance

...but rather a series of arguments supporting general openness to policy learning and change.

• The appropriate forms of co-existence between the old and new forms of governance need to be found.

• Many of the local and international institutions that will replace the older form of state management are still under construction.

• States, still prominent actors in governance, must perform new functions and acquire new competences. To meet this challenge, developing countries and countries in transition need support.

• Network governance needs to be reconciled with effective participation and the protection of the rights of those who live in and gain their livelihoods from the world’s forests.