Green Protectionism or a breakthrough for sustainable management? Different narratives on illegal logging across the globe

Seminar “Forests and development: from development discourses to providing data for decision making” Helsinki, March 1st 2016

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Presentation based on joint publication that is currently under review: G. Winkel, S. Leipold, K. Buhmann, B. Cashore, W. de Jong, I. Nathan, M. Sotirov, M. Stone: Narrating illegal logging across the globe. Between green protectionism and sustainable resource use (in review)
1. The policy perspective: the problem and its solutions
2. The academic perspective: the importance of narratives
3. Methods
4. Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe
5. Conclusions
1 The policy perspective: the problem and its solutions

Illegal logging

→ Significant share of logging worldwide
→ Viewed as important cause of global deforestation & conflicts
→ Partly ambiguous nature – legality does not guarantee sustainability

Since late 1990s on the global policy agenda

→ First voluntary approaches
→ Then domestic hard law in “Western consumer” countries
Domestic hard law in “consumer” countries

- 2008 Lacey Act Amendment in the US
- 2010 (2013) European Union’s Timber Regulation
- 2012 Illegal Logging Prohibition Act in Australia

→ Constitution of a global legality (verification) regime

Example: EU Timber Regulation

- Prohibits placing on the market for the first time of illegally harvested timber and timber products
- Requires operators to exercise due diligence along the supply chain: information, risk assessment & mitigation
The policy perspective: the problem and its solutions (3)

- But how is the problem and its solution perceived across the globe – and is the solution effective?
2 The academic perspective: the importance of narratives

Policy narratives

• “Lifeblood of politics” (McBeth et al. 2007: 88)
• Stories about problems and solutions (including responsibilities and consequences)
• Narratives are not simply mirroring the reality, but shape and create it
3 Methods

Methodological approach

• Analysis of narratives on illegal logging in 6 countries/regions: Australia, Cambodia, China, EU, Indonesia, Peru, US
• Empirical base: interviews with policy stakeholders and (policy) documents
• Identification of narratives with regard to the following dimensions:
  – Problematization
  – Policy solution including responsibilities
  – Major rhetoric figures
  – Major exclusions
  – Main actors supporting the narrative
Table: Data per country/region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country/Region</th>
<th>Interviews</th>
<th>Documents and other data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38 policy documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>28 newspaper articles, 5 NGO reports, 5 policy documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>31 policy documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>Email exchanges with 3 key forestry experts; multiple informal interviews</td>
<td>Several reports, research paper and media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19 informal conversations, 103 policy documents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe

- Great diversity of narratives in the six countries (with contradicting narratives in all of them)
- Some typical patterns relating to three groups of countries:
  1. “Western consumer” countries (Australia/EU/US)
  2. “Emerging economies” (China/Indonesia)
  3. “Developing” countries (Cambodia, Peru)
Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (2)

“Western consumer” countries (Australia/EU/US)

• Shared pattern: two opposed narratives – relating to proponents and opponents of the respective laws
• “Baptist & Bootlegger” coalitions in all cases
## Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (3)

### Table: Illegal logging narratives in the EU *(Sotirov/Stelter/Winkel)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Problematization</th>
<th>Policy Solution including responsibilities</th>
<th>Major rhetoric figures</th>
<th>Major exclusions</th>
<th>Main actors supporting the narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Union</td>
<td>Protect European industry and world’s forests</td>
<td>Illegal logging major problem; negative impacts on the image of EU industry</td>
<td>EU legislation prohibiting illegal logged timber from entering EU markets</td>
<td>Moral dimension (legality/fair competition)</td>
<td>Sustainability (narrow focus on legality)</td>
<td>ENGOs, EU timber importing industry, timber-importing EU member states</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fight illegal logging where it occurs &amp; avoid unfair competition</td>
<td>Illegal logging as problem abroad</td>
<td>Illegal logging to be prevented through policies (for) abroad</td>
<td>Burdens for domestic forest sector/EU-TR cannot be implemented</td>
<td>Responsibility of EU based companies</td>
<td>European domestic timber producers &amp; industry, forest-rich EU member states</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (5)

“Emerging Economies” (China, Indonesia)

Three main narratives

1. Objection of green Western protectionism
2. (Big) business pragmatism and chance for investments
3. Regain state control
## Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (6)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>Policy Solution including responsibilities</th>
<th>Major rhetoric figures</th>
<th>Major exclusions</th>
<th>Main actors supporting the narrative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td><strong>Legality verification weakens Chinese firms</strong></td>
<td>Illegal logging is other countries’ problems</td>
<td>no action needed</td>
<td>Environmentalists and foreign firms seek to weaken Chinese competitiveness</td>
<td>China’s involvement in illegal logging and trade</td>
<td>SMEs and Chinese government officials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>China supports legality verification where customers demand it</strong></td>
<td>International buyers have to comply with the EU and US law</td>
<td>Improve supply chain governance of companies</td>
<td>Customer is always right</td>
<td>Chinese domestic market</td>
<td>Chinese industry that seeks to export</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Legality verification enhances state authority</strong></td>
<td>Forestry department is increasingly weak</td>
<td>Develop legality verification and taxes to strengthen state control</td>
<td>Bureaucratic conflict internal to Chinese government</td>
<td>Opposition to taxes on timber trade in China</td>
<td>State Forestry Administration officials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (7)

Developing countries (Cambodia, Peru) (Nathan, Buhmann, De Jong)

Least structured & disparate narratives relate, e.g., to

• The role of local communities
• The need to strengthen the state
• Corruption of the state/high state officials
• Environmental protection

→ Focus on domestic & neglect of international issues
→ Effects of legality verification are seen as rather limited, but increasing
• Illegal logging and legality verification are discussed strikingly different across the globe
• Distinct perceptions of the problem & solutions will also impact (the debate of) effectiveness
• Narratives in “Western consumer” countries focuses strongly on global issues, narratives on “developing” countries mostly on domestic issues
• Baptist and bootleggers occur in all countries
For policy makers

→ Embrace complexity: work strategically with the mosaic of narratives
→ Be the Baptist (or bootlegger): strive for strategic alliances
→ Facilitate dialogue and learning, but respect a diversity of viewpoints
→ Invest in research to inform policy making 😊
References


For policy makers