



Research, part of a Special Feature on [Understanding Adaptive Capacity in Forest Governance](#)  
**Local Consequences of Applying International Norms: Differences in the Application of Forest Certification in Northern Sweden, Northern Finland, and Northwest Russia**

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**ABSTRACT.** Forest certification, developed in the early 1990s, is a process in which independent assessors grant use of the certification label to producers who meet certain environmental and social criteria set for their forest products. This label was quickly seen to offer a market advantage and to signal corporate social and environmental responsibility. This paper focuses on international norms pertaining to environmental and indigenous rights, as manifested in cases of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)- and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC)-compatible certification, and how these norms have been applied domestically and perceived locally in different states. Case studies are drawn from northern Sweden, northern Finland, and three regions in northwest Russia. The studies illustrate that the choice and implementation of certification type depend considerably on national infrastructure and market characteristics and result in substantial differences in the impact that international norms have at the local level.

**Key Words:** *adaptive capacity; Finland; forest certification; Russia; Sweden*

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## INTRODUCTION

Norms concerning environmental and indigenous rights have come to play a key role at the international level, at the level of state decision making, and even in the corporate sector (Ochoa 2003, Tarrow 1999). Forest certification has been described as “non-state market driven” (NSMD) governance, which, as it takes effect directly at the level of the individual firm, does not require state implementation or involvement (Wood 2004, Cashore 2002). Forest certification, developed in the early 1990s, is a process in which independent assessors grant use of the certification label to producers who meet certain environmental and social criteria set for their forest products. Certification schemes were quickly seen to offer a market advantage and to indicate corporate social responsibility. However, implementation of such schemes has varied considerably from country to country. In Sweden, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification has been the fastest-growing system, although it is now rivaled by the less demanding Programme for the Endorsement of

Forest Certification (PEFC; previously known as Pan-European Forest Certification). The major difference between the two schemes is that, in FSC, the economic, social, and environmental interest groups are on an equal footing in terms of voting power, whereas in the PEFC, forest owners’ interests predominate. The PEFC has further been criticized by environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who argue that the social and environmental standards are set too low (Ozinga 2004, Gulbrandsen 2005). The FSC scheme has become the most prevalent one in Russia, whereas Finland has adopted the PEFC-compatible Finnish Forest Certification Scheme (FFCS).

This study examines these certification schemes with a twofold objective. First, we address the question of why international norms concerning the environment and indigenous peoples (manifested in FSC and PEFC forest certification) have been institutionalized differently at the domestic level in Sweden, Russia, and Finland. We assume that this is related to differences among the countries, especially in public policy and government support,

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the role of NGOs, supply-chain pressure, and the structure of the respective forest industries. Second, we analyze how the norms affect the local level and how the local effects differ among the countries.

The paper illustrates that the norms at issue are not simply implemented with similar effects in different locations, but rather are transformed as they are translated from the international to local levels, with very different impacts on local stakeholders. The extent to which certification can be seen as adding to local adaptive capacity should be investigated for each specific case rather than being taken for granted, as it may have very different effects and levels of effect in different countries depending on the institutional structure. Adaptive capacity encompasses, among other factors, the total institutional and legislative framework that is available to actors, and determines the extent to which they can adapt to change (Smit and Wandel 2006). The way in which norms are implemented in different states and perceived in different local contexts can be seen as supporting or detracting from adaptive capacity, for instance, by compensating for limitations in state forest legislation or transferring vulnerability to other local actors.

## **INTERNATIONAL NORMS IN CERTIFICATION**

Certification has typically been seen as an example of “new governance” (Eberlein and Newman 2008) that may support the attempts to create environmental and social criteria for forestry. The certification systems were developed following failed attempts at creating a UN-based international forest convention. Indeed, certification can be seen as a way for market processes to develop what governments could not, i.e., international social and environmental criteria for the management of forests (Cashore 2002, Gulbrandsen 2005). The system has spread rapidly across the globe, with forests in approximately 79 countries being certified under FSC in 2008 (FSC 2008). The PEFC is organized as an umbrella organization with 35 independent national schemes, of which 24 have been endorsed by the PEFC Council (PEFC 2008). Although certification was originally developed predominantly by environmental NGOs, the NGO-favored form of forest certification—FSC—has been losing ground in most places to industry-based alternatives, most notably PEFC. Sweden is a

notable exception, currently holding one-fifth of the world’s FSC-certified forestland. Recent studies also suggest that although a market advantage has regularly been seen as the motive for adopting forest certification, its function of “signaling” an environmental and social consciousness—to NGOs, among other actors—may be considered even greater than price benefits (Gulbrandsen 2006, Overdevest and Rickenbach 2006). This finding suggests that one important reason why companies adopt certification is to show that they are observing environmental and social norms; in turn, this grants them a stamp of quality that may protect them from being “named and shamed,” for instance, by NGO campaigns against unsustainable timber production.

Companies may thus be seen as adhering to a particular set of norms, norms generally being defined as socially shared expectations, understandings or standards of appropriate behavior for actors with a given identity (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). The concept of a norm has been applied, at the international level in particular, to explain why states adopt rules that are not directly in their self-interest. Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) outline the way in which a norm can be seen as developing through its emergence among norm entrepreneurs, who use existing organizations and norms as platforms to name and shame non-adopters. If enough states adopt the new norm, a “tipping point” is reached, and states come to adopt the norm in response to this international pressure—even where there is no domestic coalition pressing for adoption of the norm. Over time, norm internalization results, whereby the norm is ultimately codified in domestic legislation and seen as a given (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998, Gulbrandsen 2006).

Although the domestic level has been discussed less than others, successful norm adoption has been assumed to lead to transnational actors and advocacy networks spreading norms and eventually establishing them through socialization as part of a society’s culture (Marsh and Payne 2007). However, it has also been noted that the impact of international norms cannot be taken for granted or assumed to apply in the same fashion in different contexts. Norms should be seen as being made relevant by different actors in the context of cultural matching, national political rhetoric, the material interests of domestic actors, domestic political institutions, and socializing forces such as the framing of the norm (Cotell and Davis 2000, Gurowitz 1999); similar factors have been noted in

the literature on industry and corporate self-regulation (Gunningham and Rees 1997). Specifically for forests, Gulbrandsen (2005) has suggested that the adoption of certification depends on a number of related factors: government support, societal support by NGOs and civic initiatives, supply-chain pressure, and forest industry structure (Gulbrandsen 2005). Accordingly, the main actors in certification would seem to be the international ones, notably NGOs, the state, and, through market demand, forest industry.

The present study suggests, however, that even when structures are conducive to norm adoption, the degree to which norms are actually institutionalized or socialized into more permanent structures may be limited by discrepancies between the norms enforced at international levels—and promoted to a large extent by transnational actors such as NGOs—and the positions adopted by the local forest sector charged with certifying. The situation can be described as a case of “incongruence between scales,” where policy making and management processes proceed on different levels with few interconnections, e.g., the international level, where the environmental standards are set, and the local level, where the standards are refined and implemented (Raakjaer Nielsen et al., 2002). The obvious risk in this situation, where the local level serves only as an implementing body with limited opportunity to influence environmental policies, is a limited socialization process and lack of long-term accountability of the norms in forest certification. A large number of studies have shown a well-established value rift between forestry and environmental interests, with forest owners and forest-sector interests regularly adopting much more of a focus on the economic viability of the local community (Rantala and Primmer 2003, Tikkanen et al. 2003) and on the affordability and perceived legitimacy of certification schemes for forest owners (Gulbrandsen 2004).

## **METHODOLOGY AND CASE STUDY SELECTION**

The three states represented in the case studies—Finland, Russia and Sweden—have been chosen to represent different applications of certification. The Russian forests have been certified according to the FSC standard, whereas PEFC is the dominant scheme in Finland. In Sweden, FSC is dominant in

terms of hectares certified, but PEFC is the more common form of certification for small-scale forest owners. In Russia, all land is owned by the state and, with respect to forestry, logging rights are for the most part leased to large-scale vertical forest holding companies. In Sweden, approximately 51% of the productive forest is owned by some 336 000 private (non-industrial) forest owners, with an average area per owner of 47 ha. The remaining forest land is owned by private forest companies (25%); the state, including state-owned companies (17%); other private owners; and other public owners (7%) (Swedish Forest Agency 2008). In Finland, 52% of the forest estates are owned by private (non-industrial) owners, representing more than 440 000 owners with an average holding of 24 ha. The Finnish state owns 35% of all forest land, forest industry companies 8%, and other private and other public owners the remaining 5% (Metla/Finnish Forest Research Institute 2007).

The study draws upon an extensive literature review of certification in Sweden, Finland, and Russia that provides insights into the implementation of certification at the domestic level. The research also uses semistructured interviews undertaken at the local and regional levels, which provide the basis for the analysis of local perceptions of the effects of the norms. The case studies focus on multiple uses of forest in the boreal zone in northern Sweden and Finland and three regions in northwest Russia. The studies were structured to cover a cross-section of the multiple users of forested land, including representatives of the businesses operating in the certified areas, of state forestry units (in Russia), of regional and local administrations, and of forest workers. In addition, the research includes cases of forest use that compete with that of forestry, for example, reindeer herding in northern Sweden and Finland. These cases provide an insider perspective on land use by indigenous peoples that is highlighted in certification norms and on the non-industrial use of forest products in Russia. The case studies thus include data on the impact of certification on the use of forestland by indigenous people as well as by other local inhabitants.

The interviews were semistructured with an open framework, allowing some of the responses to be quantitatively analyzed while maintaining two-way communication and the flexibility to explore relevant issues in more depth and detail than would have been possible with a closed framework (Merriam 1994). The studies were somewhat

differently targeted in the different regions (Table 1). In Finland, the study draws on a case study of the forest sector and reindeer herding in the Kemijoki river valley ( $N = 18$ ) as well as two focus-group interviews in which all interviewees were asked to identify the factors that impact their livelihood and forest use. The Swedish case studies comprise interviews with authorities relevant to forestry, certified (both FSC and PEFC) as well as non-certified forest owners and forest companies, and representatives of herders, in a study of all these categories in the Pite river valley in Norrbotten county ( $N = 18$ ) as well with herders' representatives and forest company representatives in the entire Swedish reindeer herding area ( $N = 46$ , of which 14 forest industry companies and 32 herders' representatives). In addition, the separate studies drew upon either focus groups or participant observation as supplementary sources. The Pite valley study targeted factors that interviewees viewed as impacting their livelihood—with interviewees largely mentioning certification independently as an important impact—whereas the latter study elicited perceptions of the impact of certification on forestry–reindeer husbandry consultation procedures. For northwest Russia, the paper draws upon case studies in the Republic of Karelia, Arkhangelsk oblast, and the Komi Republic ( $N = 179$ ), as well as participant observation. Given the structure of ownership in Russia, where land is owned by the state and leased out, the case study focuses on the large-scale vertical forest companies holding leases in the areas. The material also includes interviews with representatives of local units of logging enterprises and in general targets the development and implications of certification, including the development of the FSC in the country. Interviews were undertaken in the period 2003–2005 for the Swedish and Finnish cases, and 2003–2007 for the Russian study. Interviews were analyzed manually or, in some cases, using the Atlas.ti program for qualitative analysis.

In general, qualitative studies aim to cover the understanding of a topic rather than a representative sample. Thus, a conclusive result can be identified if very different groups agree on the importance of a factor, for instance, certification. The large number of interviews in Russia is a result of the extensive case-study areas covered (three regions) as well as the aim of describing the development of certification in northwest Russia. In the results, the proportions of interviewees agreeing or disagreeing with a measure are presented to highlight areas in

which there was some disagreement among interviewees, often due to specific local situations, or to indicate different patterns of perceptions among the interviewees.

## **THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT ACTORS IN THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF FOREST CERTIFICATION**

The results are structured into two parts. The domestic-level description below focuses on identifying the role of different actors in the processes, namely, the role of public policy and government support, the role of NGOs and advocacy groups, the role of supply-chain pressures, and the role of the structure of forest industry (Gulbrandsen 2005) in shaping the institutionalization of certification in the countries studied. The latter part will focus on local perceptions of the impact that certification has had on livelihoods.

### **Public Policy and Government Support for Certification Initiatives**

Overall, differences in public policy and government support do not seem to have made for a significant difference where the application of forest certification is concerned. Although the state had no formal role in certification, all three states were supportive of certification. In Sweden and Finland, although certification sets stricter requirements than national legislation does, it has been supported through, among other ways, the informal participation of government officials during its institutionalization (Elliott and Schlaepfer 2001, Boström 2002, Gulbrandsen 2005, Cashore et al. 2007). In the more complex federal system of Russia, the federal forest agency (“rosleskhoz”) supports forest certification; however, not all of the FSC requirements are included in the normative basis of the new Forest Code enacted in 2007. Differences can be seen in the extent to which different regional governments have reacted to certification and interpret the differences between FSC and the Forest Code. In the Komi Republic, all forestry-unit representatives were very supportive of certification. One reason for this may be that the regional government has had a good working relationship with environmental NGOs, and certification is a way of attracting international partners and international trade given the Republic's location far from the EU border; in addition, the

**Table 1.** Distribution of respondents among sectors and case studies

	Representatives of the forest sector <sup>a</sup>	Representatives of logging companies <sup>b</sup> , the refinement industry	Representatives of regional/local administration	Representatives of local communities, including reindeer husbandry
Finnish case (N = 18)	6	1	5	6
Karelia Republic (N = 58)	7	14	6	31
Arkhangelsk region (N = 53)	6	12	7	28
Komi Republic (N = 68)	6	11	9	42
Swedish case <sup>c</sup> (N = 64)	18	3	6	37

<sup>a</sup> Forest owners and forest owners' interest groups, state forestry units/forest companies

<sup>b</sup> In Russia, subsidiaries.

<sup>c</sup> Pite River valley, N = 18; reindeer herding area, N = 46.

region is not very dependent on forestry (Tysiachniouk and Reisman 2004, 2005, Tysiachniouk 2006, Tulaeva 2008a). In the largely forest-dependent region of Karelia, on the other hand, certification is perceived as somewhat less beneficial, to some extent because of a large conflict in the 1990s in which NGOs organized boycotts that prompted foreign industries to leave Karelia and influenced the relationship between NGOs and regional government (Tysiachniouk 2009, Tulaeva 2008b). Most of the forestry-unit representatives also declared that they have abided by the requirements of state legislation rather than certification where the two conflict, namely, in the certification requirements for the preservation of key biotopes on plots that by law are to be clearcut. In Karelia, unlike in Arkhangelsk, governmental forestry units have penalized companies for biodiversity conservation, which has resulted in companies starting to set aside key biotopes as non-exploitable zones in order to avoid violating Russian legislation (Tulaeva 2008b).

### **The Role of NGOs, Supply-Chain Pressures, and Forest-Industry Structure**

To a large extent, NGOs and supply-chain pressure can be seen as principal motives for certification and these factors are well described in the literature. Certification norms have been instituted largely through a "naming and shaming" process, as would have been expected for international norm adoption, although here it has involved companies as well as states (Tysiachniouk 2009). For example, environmental organizations in the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany contributed to creating public opinion that supported environmental labeling and demands on the suppliers of forestry material. Sweden is the largest single exporter of wood to the UK and, with certification being developed in the UK at the time, a mutual pressure emerged for each country to adjust to what would become the norm in the other (cf. McNichol 1999). In addition, Swedish NGOs directed attention to forestry practices in Sweden during the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), naming and shaming Sweden, which has generally been considered an

environmentally oriented state and thus has a national culture that is generally responsive to normative arguments (Elliott and Schlaepfer 2001). The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation (SSNC) initiated the Swedish FSC process along with, among others, the Swedish Saami Union (SSR), which organizes Swedish reindeer herders (Gulbrandsen 2005). Working with their counterparts in countries where Swedish forest products had key export markets, Swedish NGOs influenced buyers to require certified wood, by again applying a naming and shaming tactic: “[t]hese retailers did not want to be identified by the NGOs as selling environmentally ‘unfriendly’ products and saw certification as a guarantee for them and their customers” (Elliott and Schlaepfer 2001:659). Eventually, however, small-scale forest owners, who found Saami demands regarding reindeer grazing too harsh, withdrew from the process to establish the Swedish PEFC scheme, dividing the forest sector between FSC (large-scale companies) and PEFC (small-scale forest owners) (Gulbrandsen 2005).

In Finland, the preference for the PEFC system stems from the early and extensive institutionalization of the standard; forest-owner organizations, originally skeptical of the environmental NGO-led FSC standard, were able to develop the PEFC when environmental NGOs withdrew from the originally FSC-oriented process in 1997 (Lindström et al. 1999). The PEFC-authorized Finnish Forest Certification Scheme (FFCS) started in 1999 and within a year 95% of all Finnish forests had been certified through the state’s 13 regional forestry centers; the centers applied for the certificate for their members, arguing that the PEFC was a more suitable alternative for small-scale forest owners, the dominant category in Finland (Greenpeace 2004, Cashore et al. 2007). Environmental NGOs have criticized the FFCS standard for paying too little attention to environmental concerns (Greenpeace Nordic and Finnish Nature League et al. 2001); however, with the institutionalization of the FFCS, the Finnish FSC standard, which was endorsed by NGOs, never gained a high market percentage in Finland (Greenpeace 2004). With regard to indigenous rights, critics also note that the FFCS only requires that there has been cooperation, regardless of its results. The draft FSC standard requires that reindeer herders must accept and officially approve all of the Finnish Forestry and Park Service’s logging plans in their area, that forest management plans must protect sites important to Saami culture, and that the relevant management

plans must be endorsed by the Saami Parliament (Greenpeace 2004). Together with the market dependence on Finnish high-quality printing paper products, these arguments by small-scale forest owners resulted in the market accepting alternatives to the FSC scheme (Cashore et al. 2007, Owari et al. 2006). In sum, a number of factors contributed to the institutionalization of the PEFC scheme in Finland: the putative legitimacy of the scheme for forest owners, market dependence on Finnish products, the early acceptance of the scheme, and the smaller percentage of industry-owned land in Finland compared with Sweden.

In Russia, the role of environmental NGOs and their success in institutionalizing themselves seem to be a major reason for the choice of FSC certification (Tysiachniouk 2006, Tysiachniouk and Reisman 2005, Kotilainen et al. 2008). Following publicized consumer boycotts prompted by plans for logging in old-growth forests in Karelia, NGOs such as the Forest Club, Greenpeace, and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) drew up maps of old-growth forests (Tysiachniouk and Reisman 2004, Tysiachniouk 2009). The WWF made an effort to build up an institutional infrastructure for FSC by creating FSC support centers (Tysiachniouk 2006). The Fund also promoted the scheme through strategic partnerships with the retailer IKEA and the forest company Stora Enso, and developed a sustainable producers’ group in Russia within the framework of the Global Forest and Trade Network (GFTN), which is associated with the FSC. Industries today sign informal agreements with the NGOs providing for voluntary moratoriums on logging old-growth forest on their forest lease areas and have also excluded some of these territories from their lease in order to designate them special protected areas (Tysiachniouk 2006, Tysiachniouk 2008). During the early stages of the FSC scheme, Greenpeace was a contact for the scheme in the area and was active in protecting old-growth forests and initiating voluntary moratoriums. The NGOs thus played an instrumental role in institutionalizing the FSC standard in Russia. Given the state ownership of land in Russia, where it is primarily large-scale companies that hold leases, small-scale forest owners cannot constitute a power factor as they do in Sweden and Finland. Instead, the boycotts in Karelia and Arkhangelsk may be seen as having promoted FSC certification (Tysiachniouk 2008), as logging companies felt that it protects them from the threat of further boycotts and provides them with stability on the sensitive European markets.

## IMPACTS OF FOREST CERTIFICATION AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Above, the role of environmental NGOs and the structure of property rights have been described as crucial in instituting forest certification, and as potentially playing a significant role in determining which type of certification becomes established. However, traces of conflicts between forest sector and environmental interests can also be seen: for instance, in the environmental NGO boycott of the forest industry in Karelia that influenced the Karelian government's support of certification and in Finnish forest owners' reluctance to accept FSC certification—developments reminiscent of what has been described as a value inconsistency between forestry and environmental attitudes (Rantala and Primmer 2003).

This part of the study is structured to take into account environmental and social concerns with regard to the impact of certification perceived by local interviewees, with the targeted areas for each country being described under each heading. In general, the differences between dominant types of certification can be seen in the discussions in the areas. In Sweden, many of the interviewees in forestry independently identified certification as an important impact on their forest use, whereas none in Finland did so. This may be seen as illustrating the greater impact of the more stringent FSC certification. When asked about the role of certification, interviewees in Finland had relatively few comments, and mainly saw certification as a natural step forward with a relatively restricted impact at the local level. In Russia, certification was largely placed within an environmental framework as well as a social framework where certification was seen as contributing to workers' rights and consultations with local communities.

### Environmental Concerns

The environmental concerns relating to certification were emphasized in all regions, and in Finland, these were cited as the main reason for certification; however, none of the interviewees mentioned certification as having an important impact on their forest use. When prompted about the role of certification, interviewees noted, among other things, that being certified seems to have a market value. One interviewee noted the considerable impact of media and public opinion, stating that

conflicts over environmental matters in northernmost Finland might impact the image of northern forestry as a whole. For instance, Finland may be perceived as more of a nature sanctuary than a production area, with concomitant impacts on business viability:

*[T]he further away ..., [the company offices] are, the less they know about local conditions in Lapland. Even in the case of a Finnish organization ... a director ... may think that ... Lapland is an area for recreation, not for wood production.*

As can be seen in Table 2, many of the interviewees in the Swedish forestry sector either independently identified certification as an important impact on their forest use or saw it as having a large impact on them, reflecting the FSC demands. In the Pite river valley study, many of the forest sector interviewees were also concerned about the levels of nature protection required by the scheme. Among other things, interviewees were concerned that FSC has no upper limit on how much of the holdings should be put aside for conservation purposes. Interviewees in forestry were also concerned that the norm is not applicable to areas that already have large nature reserves or to the type of forest found in northern Sweden. Most of the interviewees represented certified companies—the majority through FSC and some private, smallholders through PEFC—and described certification as a de facto requirement. Only one party was not yet certified, and cited the FSC norms on levels of conservation as the reason for this; the interviewee noted that if it did obtain certification, it would have to exempt much of its area from logging due to age structure, as FSC does not place an upper limit on conservation requirements (interviewee at Common Forest, Sweden). The same actor noted that the mismatch between requirements in the Forest Act and certification creates a “Catch 22” for forestry in high-value forest areas: the Forest Act may permit logging in areas where the FSC would prohibit it, yet, unlike the Act, the scheme does not provide for compensation for economic losses due to protection. The FSC system was seen as being “developed for forestry where you only have production forest ... and where there is not so much forest set aside in reserves ... it is not at all adapted for the inland regions” (interviewee at Common Forest, Sweden; similar opinions were also noted by interviewees at Sveaskog and the Swedish Forest Agency).

**Table 2.** Perceived importance of certification on forest use per sector (%)<sup>a</sup>

	Representatives of the forest sector <sup>b</sup>	Representatives of logging companies <sup>c</sup> , the refinement industry	Representatives of regional/local administration	Representatives of local communities, including reindeer husbandry
Finnish case (N = 18)	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
Karelia Republic (N = 58)	14%	30%	20%	70%
Arkhangelsk region (N = 53)	17%	20%	40%	56%
Komi Republic (N = 68)	60%	5%	60%	75%
Swedish case (N = 64)	94%	33%	17%	38%

<sup>a</sup> The table draws upon the relatively small percentages per group indicated in Table 1, and is thus indicative of opinions in the studies: they should not be assumed to represent the areas as a whole. Results in the table indicate the number of persons that either independently identified certification as an impact or saw it as having a large impact on them, reflecting the methodologies of the different studies.

<sup>b</sup> Forest owners and forest owners' interest groups, state forestry units/forest companies.

<sup>c</sup> Subsidiaries in Russia.

In contrast to how regulation was viewed, protection through market demands and FSC certification was largely taken as a given rather than as something that could be influenced and changed, perhaps reflecting that market forces are considered less malleable than state regulation. This perception led to people feeling unhappy about state protection measures that added to the protection requirements associated with certification, such as nature protection in reserves: “we are FSC- and ISO-certified, we have not noted that the market would have any other plans ... but that is yet not enough, more forest is still to be put away [for protection]” (interviewee at SCA forest company, Sweden). It was also felt that the National Forest Board did not value voluntary conservation to the same degree as it did regulated environmental protection, and that this imposed twofold conservation requirements on forestry.

In Russia, FSC certification has forced companies to designate high-conservation-value forests of different types and sign voluntary moratoriums with

NGOs to protect old-growth forests. Certification under the FSC has also resulted in the implementation of protection from gasoline leaks, which was required by Russian legislation but not implemented. All interviewees looked positively on conservation measures fostered by the FSC, with the exception of some of the representatives of holding subsidiaries (in particular in Arkhangelsk and Karelia), who did not see value in preservation of old-growth forests; in their view, such forests may spread pests and pose fire hazards. All community representatives interviewed in the Russian regions welcomed all forms of conservation, although a few felt indifferent to the old-growth forests, which are located far from the villages.

### Social Concerns

In Sweden and Finland, forestry and reindeer husbandry are practiced in the same areas in the northern parts of the countries. In Sweden, a



consultation procedure between public forest companies and reindeer herding units has been required by law since 1979. As a result of FSC certification, this practice has been extended to the whole reindeer grazing area, with potentially great significance for the perception of certification locally. With some exceptions (concession areas), reindeer herding may only be practiced by the Saami minority (Reindeer Husbandry Act 1971:437 §1). In Finland, there are limited requirements for consultations, and also, at the time of the study, PEFC certification placed relatively few demands for consultation (MTK (Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners) 2001). In Finland, any citizen has the right to herd reindeer; it is only in the country's northernmost areas that the right is restricted to Saami, therefore, there was far less of a focus on the implications of certification for indigenous peoples in the case study area in southern Lapland (cf. Keskitalo 2008).

On balance, concerns with regard to certification and indigenous rights appeared primarily in Sweden, where there was a fear that the social demands of FSC certification would mainly affect indigenous groups and reindeer herding. In particular, interviewees in forestry highlighted the need for social criteria in certification requirements to emphasize not only the value of indigenous practices, but also the importance of forestry to the local economy:

*There is more of a focus on indigenous populations when you talk about social values ... [but] it is also a question of social values that you can continue living on your holding, that you can have an income from the forest because there are forest entrepreneurs and drivers, and together there are so many of you that you can keep the shop in the village and so on ... those are social values too. If you conserve most of the forest, the economic flow in the village stops and it becomes depopulated ... At many places this is a risk (interviewee at Common Forest, Sweden).*

A minority of the reindeer herding representatives interviewed felt that FSC certification had had an impact on the relationship between the two sectors (see Table 1). This was largely because FSC certification meant that reindeer herding could require consultations with the companies and that "the companies stopped questioning the rights of

the reindeer herding companies to graze their reindeer on the lands owned by the [forestry] company." The dissatisfaction related to the fact that the broadening of the consultation mechanisms under FSC, similar to those under Swedish law, was to take account of "essential" reindeer husbandry requirements. These essential requirements have not been adequately defined. As a result, the FSC process "doesn't mean that we may influence the planning process of the companies to any great extent. It is very difficult to get any support for our claims." A minority of the reindeer herding representatives were thus of the opinion that FSC had not had any particularly extensive influence on the consultations, as it does not make it possible to stop or to delay clearcutting in areas of particular importance. The forest companies interviewed, however, had a rather unanimous view that the FSC scheme had brought new opportunities for reindeer herding to influence the planning process of the forest companies in that "there are more consultations nowadays. Due to FSC, they [the consultations] are more focused...and we can't always do as we want or use the methods we would like to use."

In the Russian case-study areas, the social requirements of FSC certification have been very broadly interpreted and implemented. The scheme allows local communities to designate forests of social value together with the companies. These sites may have archeological, cultural, historical, or religious value, or be mushroom- or berry-picking grounds, for which no protection mechanisms existed earlier. In regions where much of the territory is leased, the law allows logging to be undertaken as close as 1 km to a village, meaning that villages lose much of the subsistence areas where mushrooms, berries, firewood, and wood for house repair and maintenance are generally taken. In Karelia and Komi, many valuable sites, including archeological and historical places such as war grounds, as well as mushroom- and berry-picking areas, have been preserved due to FSC certification. However, in Arkhangelsk, representatives of fishing communities that are situated on the coast of the White Sea and have hunting grounds within the leased areas expressed concern, as at the time of research they had not as yet reached an agreement with the company on designating hunting and water protection zones along the rivers.

Industries are also obliged under FSC certification standards to provide firewood to the villages at low

cost. As can be seen in Table 2, perceptions vary among local interviewees in the Russian regions. Many of the interviewees in Arkhangelsk, and to some extent in Karelia, were not satisfied with the price of wood or delivery conditions, although these might cease were it not for the FSC requirement. In Komi, wood supply has been better, as there are many small businesses that deliver firewood to local communities. Companies also often pay small grants to support activities that are consistent with the FSC: for instance, social festivals or museums, or community infrastructure and maintenance, have to some extent come into existence as a result of international projects (especially in Karelia). Consistent with the Russian socialist tradition of industry supporting communities, as well as part of spreading information about FSC certification and gaining local attendance at meetings, lease agreements may include a stipulation that industry is to support community infrastructure.

The FSC requirements have also resulted in consultations between companies and local communities in the Russian regions. Companies now provide public reports and public summaries after audits and discuss logging in the communities, whereas previously they were only in contact with the state. Records need to be made of all consultations, and procedures exist to deal with damage by loggers to house fences or other property; this is a requirement of Russian law but one that is not always enforced. All representatives of local administrations were satisfied with the process of consultations; most community representatives were interested and actively engaged in the process of consultations and stated that the process was important for them. Certification has also had a significant impact on improvements in workers' rights and safety. Workers' equipment is required to be consistent under FSC standards and includes safety helmets and equipment, medical equipment for each harvester, and fire hazard equipment. All representatives of the companies agreed that they had received the safety equipment and that the safety requirements were enforced. This standard, too, is required in Russian legislation but not enforced, and the FSC procedure has been able to provide enforcement.

Given the lack of enforcement of legislation in these cases, FSC has had a relatively large impact on local social situations and opportunities for consultation. With the decline in social responsibility after the

end of the Cold War, however, some interviewees feel that certification could contribute even more: "the core [of certification] is to give work to people, wages to pay and so on we should [assure] that there are permanent job[s available locally]" (interviewee at Russian forestry company). Due to the population structure in the regions under study, indigenous issues were, however, not prominent in the Russian cases.

### **CONCLUSION: INTERNATIONAL NORMS IN FOREST CERTIFICATION AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

This paper has shown that forest certification has to a large extent been championed by environmental NGOs and, in all of the cases presented here, with support from the state. The norms prevalent in discussions of the international forest regime and pertaining to the environment and indigenous peoples (cf. Humphreys 2004) have been institutionalized in the three countries. The degree to which this has occurred depends on the level of early institutionalization of schemes initiated by environmental NGOs, such as FSC, and factors such as ownership and buyer structure (Table 3). This institutionalization can be seen in the fact that even where forest industry or small-scale forest owners have objected to environmental demands, the norm of environmental and indigenous rights has been the yardstick against which alternative schemes, for instance PEFC, have been developed and measured (cf. McNichol 1999). For large-scale forest companies, certification fulfills an important signaling function that helps protect the companies from the risk of boycotts.

However, FSC certification, or a stronger expression of environmental and social or indigenous rights, has been challenged predominantly by small-scale forestry interests, which consider the legitimacy of these NGO-led schemes limited (cf. Gulbrandsen 2004). This situation may also explain the rapid development of alternatives to FSC certification put forward by such forest owners. Legitimacy for forest owners is here a result of their ownership and stake in the scheme, whereas environmental NGOs are regularly seen as arguing positions other than those of small-scale owners. In the countries studied here, objections to the FSC certification scheme with its predominantly environmental focus have been strongest in Finland, which has a large proportion of small-scale forest

**Table 3.** Explaining variation in institutionalization and perception of certification schemes

	Finland/PEFC	Russia/FSC	Sweden/FSC&PEFC
Impact of forest industry structure on institutionalization of certification <sup>a</sup>	Large proportion of small-scale forest owners supporting PEFC	Major holdings supporting FSC	Mix of large- and small-scale forest owners resulting in mixed FSC/PEFC system
Impact on local level of certification	PEFC resulting in relatively minor perceived impact	Major impact of FSC with focus on social and environmental criteria (implementing state legislation)	Impact of FSC with focus on indigenous issues, but limited decisive capacities

<sup>a</sup> Impact of the other factors studied (NGOs, supply-chain pressures, and governmental support) was strong in all areas.

owners and compared with, for example, Sweden, a smaller percentage of forest-industry land ownership. However, local dissatisfaction with certification can also be seen in other areas, such as FSC-dominated northern Sweden, where the impact of norms on both the environment and indigenous practices has been challenged. By the same token, an interview study of herders' representatives in Sweden has shown that, on the whole, herders do not consider the FSC scheme as currently implemented to be sufficiently protective of their rights, which may also limit its support locally.

Incongruent scales or complexity of impact depending on level and actor thus make for an equally diverse effect of forest certification on the adaptive capacity of actors. On a general level where differentiation between different schemes is not made, certification may be seen as supporting all actors despite their different goals: environmental NGOs and states achieve environmental protection, and forest owners and industry gain other advantages, such as signaling corporate social responsibility. In terms of national frameworks, certification played a particularly large role in supporting enforcement in areas where enforcement has otherwise been lacking (such as Russian social and environmental legislation), and also provided a supplementary mechanism by which the state could accomplish environmental protection goals. In Russia, certification may support local adaptive capacity by offering a mechanism for involvement

and redress where decisions on forested land are concerned. At the level of the individual local inhabitant, however—the forest owner or, especially in Sweden and Finland, the reindeer herder—impacts on adaptive capacity may be highly differentiated: although forest certification may be a requirement in some buyer structures, actors in the forestry sector may perceive conflicting requirements—in the case of both formal and voluntary conservation, for instance—or quite simply not recognize their (production-oriented) values in the certification scheme. These then prompt them to support alternative standards, such as the PEFC, where the buyer structure, among other factors, makes this possible. In the case of reindeer husbandry in Sweden, forest certification was seen as a very limited improvement and as offering limited added value, as herders did not in practice attain decision-making capacities.

Responses to this article can be read online at:  
<http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol14/iss2/art1/responses/>

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