

# Forests, institutions, discourses

A discursive-institutional analysis of global forest politics

Prof. dr. Bas Arts

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Rector Magnificus, Ladies and Gentlemen,

#### Introduction

My inaugural address deals with the development of global forest politics since the early 1980s. These politics are often considered a failure (Chaytor, 2001; Dimitrov, 2005). Some commentators refer to the fact that deforestation figures have remained high since the 1980s, others claim that the policy responses concerned are only of a symbolic nature, not intended to cause effects. However, I do not share the view that global forest politics have (entirely) failed. Inspired by a specific theoretical approach, I will present another perspective on global forest politics and on policy success and failure. But before going into theory, I will outline the issues at stake and the policy responses concerned.

#### The issues at stake

The issue of deforestation dominated the environmental agenda in the early 1980s. At that time it became clear that huge areas of forest were disappearing or were degrading in many countries around the world. The tropical forests, and in particular the Amazon region in Brazil, demanded spe-

cial attention. Figures on the Amazon pointed to a yearly loss of forest about one third the size of the Netherlands (Kolk, 1996). Important driving-forces for deforestation in the Amazon were commercial logging, conversion of forests to agricultural lands, uncontrolled burning, demand for firewood, large-scale development programs, poverty, population pressure, migration patterns and drug cultivation (Humphæys, 1996). As these driving-forces became stronger in the 1980s, the (potential) adverse effects of deforestation – such as loss of biodiversity, increase of global warming and loss of forested lands for indigenous peoples – became pressing problems that needed to be addressed.

Later on, deforestation in other countries than Brazil (Canada, Ivo ry Coast, Russia) and the loss and degradation of other types of forests (temperate and boreal forests, ancient forests, in general) became part of the political agenda. In addition, it became clear that forest regulation at the national level, particularly in developing countries, was weak or side-stepped by illegal practices. At the international level, the situation was not much better; at the time hardly any international governance structure existed for 'good' forest management. As a consequence, forestry in many areas of the world resembled a sort of 'wild we st' economy, where legality, and long-term as well as sustainability considerations were more or less absent. These problems led to a number of policy responses by various organizations.<sup>2</sup>

# **Tropical Forestry Action Program (TFAP)**

A first response originated from the World Recourse Institute (WRI), which is a US-based Non-Governmental Organization, and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations (UN). Both the WRI and the FAO launched a Tropical Forestry Action Program (TFAP)

in the midst of the 1980s, the two of which merged in 1987 (Humphreys, 1996). This common program focused on improving land use in forested areas, on promoting good forest management practices, on conserving biodiversity and on building institutions to achieve these goals, to name a few. The TFAP brought together several developing and developed countries and mobilized many financial resources. Yet Non-Governmental Organizations – NGOs such as Greenpeace International and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) – and 'independent' experts criticized the TFAP for being too focused on the interests of rich donor countries and the forestry sector. As a result, the program was reformed in 1990, but controversies continued. Opinions differed on whether the TFAP should put developmental or conservation objectives first.

# International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)

A second response to deforestation came from timber importing and exporting countries. These countries adopted the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) in 1983 (Tarasofsky, 1999).3 Although the ITTA was originally and purely meant as a trade agreement, biodiversity and sustainability considerations were added during the negotiation process, not in the least because the World Conservation Union (IUCN), one of the largest nature conservation organizations in the world, was able to lobby effectively for a broader approach (Humphreys, 1996:57). From the ITTA emerged the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO). This body launched Target 2000 renamed Objective 2000 at a later stage - in 1990, which states that all timber trade should be based on sustainable sources and management by the year 2000. This target was a (weaker) response to Target 1995 of the World Wide

Fund for Nature (WWF), which was presented in 1989 but which sought to achieve the same goal 5 years earlier.

Another topic that came up in the ITTO at that time was the labeling of sustainable timber products, so that consumers could make a choice between sustainable and non-sustainable timber products. Particularly the NGOs, not in the least WWF, with the support of some countries, like the UK and the Netherlands, propagated such an approach in the ITTO. However, most developing countries opposed labeling programs because they feared import restrictions by the industrialized countries. Also, the GATT (now known as the World Trade Organization or WTO) considered labeling illegal, since there should be no trade discrimination between like products. Due to this opposition, the labeling debate waned in the ITTO and shifted towards another body (see below).

# **Global Forest Instrument (GFI)**

A third response to the 'global forest crisis' was the search for a legally-binding global forest instrument that would urge all countries to conserve their forests and to use them in a sustainable way. This debate was mainly held in the context of the UNCED preparatory process. UNCED stands for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992. Parallel to UNCED, three global conventions — on climate change, biodiversity and forests — were to be prepared and to be signed by countries in Rio de Janeiro While the first two conventions we re finalized, the third one, however, failed due to a number of factors (Johnson, 1993).

First, parties involved in negotiations of the convention disagreed on the type of instrument required: a binding treaty, a binding protocol to an existing treaty or a non-

binding declaration. Second, rich and poor countries had different perceptions. The developed countries saw poverty as the main cause of deforestation (misuse of forests), whereas developing countries perceived it as a problem which was also caused by the rich countries (timber trade). Moreover, many rich and poor countries disagreed on the question of ownership. While the former considered the worldwide stock of valuable forests as a 'common heritage of mankind', the latter persisted in the idea of national sovereignty. Another disagreement between North and South was a different emphasis on the function of forests: the conservation of biodiversity, on the one hand (most developed countries), and the use of natural resources, on the other (most developing countries). Finally, money was a problem, too. Developing countries urged industrialized countries to increase development assistance for forest conservation and management while the latter were reluctant to commit themselves.

Due to all these frictions, a legally-binding global forest convention failed. As an alternative, the G77 – the group of developing countries – tabled a draft for a non-binding statement on forest principles. This proposal was, with some adaptations, finally adopted in Rio de Janeiro. Overall, this statement – consisting of principles on national sovereignty, the different functions of forests, reforestation, development assistance, timber trade and the sustainable use of forests, amongst others – is considered weak and vague (Johnson, 1993).

# United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF)

After UNCED, a considerable mistrust remained among the different forest stakeholders, especially among developed and developing countries. The NGOs were also disappointed about what they considered 'state failure'. As a result, several NGOs changed strategies and turned to the market to find new élan and solutions for the forest *proble - matique* (see below). Governments, in turn, started confidence-building trajectories, bilateral among individual countries of the North and the South and multilateral under the banner of the Commission for Sustainable Development, a body which was established at the UNCED.

To some extent, these confidence-building initiatives succeeded (Humphreys, 1996; Tarasofsky, 1999). Countries started new dialogues on 'Criteria and Indicators' (C & I for the insiders) for sustainable forest management in regional arenas (Asia, Africa, and Latin America). At the same time, producer and consumer countries agreed upon a renewed International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA) in 1994. Furthermore, countries also established the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) under the United Nations (UN), to further the international forest policy dialogue.

The IPF met several times during its two-year mandate (1993-1995). In that time, it developed over a 100 proposals for action on sustainable forest management and urged countries to develop National Forest Programs (NFPs). After the IPF ended, the UN decided to continue the dialogue in the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). This follow-up initiative met four times between 1997 and 2000, designed about 120 action proposals on all kinds of forest-related topics and discussed – again – the need for a binding forest convention. This discussion stranded another time and the dialogue continued under a *third* flag: the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), which was established by the UN in 2000. Since its establishment, the

8

UNFF has met 6 times. Four issues with which it has dealt stand out: (1) implementation, monitoring and reporting of the IFP/IFF measures by countries; (2) financial assistance and environmentally-sound technology for sustainable forest management; (3) development of an international legal framework; and (4) National Forest Programs (NFPs).

# Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)

In the meantime, given these regulatory problems of governments, several environmental organizations had expressed their wish to do business with industry on sustainable forestry. As one NGO leader said, "You cannot just sit back and wait for governments to agree, because this could take forever" (Bendell, 2000: 69). For example, the WWF started a dialogue with industry under the slogan *Forests are your business* in the UK in 1991. At a global level, similar developments – dialogues between NGOs and industry – also took place. In 1993, 150 organizations from the business sector, the environmental sector and the human rights movement founded the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in Toronto (Meidinger, 2002). Today, its headquarter is in Bonn, Germany.

The overall aim of the FSC is to stop large-scale deforestation and unsustainable forestry around the world through the market mechanism (Cashore et al., 2004). It promotes responsible forest management that enhances the conservation and sustainable use of forests. The FSC system is based on ten principles, amongst others on forest benefits, management plans, ownership rights and responsibilities, forest conservation, rights of the local community, environmental impacts, legality, and plantation. These principles have been worked out into a number of more practical

criteria. If forest owners and timber producers meet these criteria, they can be certified by the FSC. Subsequently, they may use the FSC trademark, so that wood processors, retailers and consumers can recognize this timber. Regular monitoring of compliance to these criteria is undertaken by independent organizations.

# Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG)

An aspect of sustainable forest management is the concept of 'legality'. According to most definitions, sustainable timber should also be *legal* timber, which means timber that is harvested, processed and traded in accordance with given legal requirements (although there is discussion about the proper definition of 'legality' and 'illegality' in forestry). The topic came to prominence at the end of the 1990s when both NGOs and (Western) governments argued that this problem had become too big to ignore. Figures on logging at the time showed that over 50% of logging activities in many tropical countries and about 10% of the entire global timber trade were illegal (Pottinger, 2003). In 1998, the G-8 launched an action program on forests, which gave high priority to solving the problem of illegal logging. This initiative gave birth to a partnership between the World Bank, UK, USA and several East Asian countries, which established the first regional Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) process. Soon thereafter, other regions followed, like Africa and Europe.

In Europe, the FLEG initiative is called FLEGT, with the 'T' standing for 'trade', since European countries are consumers in the case of tropical timber. In 2003, the EU adopted the FLEGT Action Program (Commission of the European Communities, 2003). This program focuses on multi-lateral co-operation between producer and consumer

countries with regard to governance reform, capacity-building and banning illegal timber from the European market. An important instrument in implementing the program is the so-called Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA). At the moment, four such agreements with tropical timber producing countries are in preparation or initial implementation, with some EU-members taking the lead, for example the Netherlands (co-operating with Malaysia) and the UK (with Ghana). As a result, systems of improved law enforcement, governance reform, verification and monitoring are being set up in these countries. Although FLEG is mainly intergovernmental in nature, private sectors also play a role in the processes. For example, timber producers and traders are developing measures to guarantee legality in their chains of custody, whereas NGOs offer their input in these processes (e.g. WWF). At the same time, NGOs criticize the voluntary nature and lack of transparency of the bi-lateral VPA negotiations. They also fear that the legality issue has forced the (more controversial and demanding) issue of sustainability into the background and that this emphasis might discriminate against the poor, whose felling practices are often considered 'illegal' by their governments (Colchester, 2006).

#### How successful have these initiatives been?

In the above sections, the main policy responses to the 'global forest crisis' have been shortly dealt with (TFAP, ITTO, GFI, UNFF, FSC, FLEG). But do these responses make a difference? Have the problems been addressed, solved or indeed reduced as a consequence of these policy initiatives? The Tropical Forestry Action Program (TFAP) mobilized several countries and resources. But it also created controversy. Critics questioned its focus as well as its ef-

fectiveness (Humphreys, 1996). The International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO), next, was successful in incorporating biodiversity and sustainability considerations in its negotiation processes, but failed in implementing Target 2000 (Meidinger, 2002). After all, most traded timber still does *not* come from sustainable sources. Regarding the Global Forest Instrument (GFI): no global forest convention has been agreed upon so far. Nearly twenty years of international diplomacy in several intergovernmental arenas has not produced consensus on the need for and modalities of such a legally-binding instrument. However, the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) can be credited for having countries adopting voluntary National Forest Programs (NFPs). According to some, these NFPs function as new modes of governance, which bring new élan to national forest policies in a number of countries (Pülzl and Rametsteiner, 2002). To others, these NFPs are just new forms of symbolic politics (Dimitrov, 2005). The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) seems more successful (Cashore et al., 2004). Today, about 3500 companies and about 500 forest areas in 55 countries around the world have been FSC certified.7 This amounts to 37 million ha., which is about 10 times the size of the Netherlands. Yet, from a global perspective, this figure is less impressive. But, more important than the number of hectares and companies is, maybe, the fact that the FSC has challenged both industry and governments to follow with competing certification programmes, although these are generally less strict from an ecological and social point of view. Some such programmes are the American Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), the Malaysian Timber Certification Council (MTCC) and the Pan-European program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC)

(Visseren-Hamakers and Glasbergen, 2006). The Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) processes, finally, have been successful in mobilizing enthusiasm among many stakeholders from the North and South as well as from the private and the public sectors (Pottinger, 2003). Moreover, bi-lateral voluntary agreements between the EU and several timber exporting countries are in the making. However, the classical North-South divide on the forest issue seems not to have disappeared in this dossier, which may soon resurface and temper this initial enthusiasm.

The above overview, of course, raises the question when a policy initiative should or could be called 'successful'. In much policy evaluation literature, a distinction is made between policy output, policy outcome and policy impact (Dunn, 1994; Crabbé et al., 2006). Output refers to plans, ideas, rules, etc., which are produced by a policy process. Outcome describes the behavioural change in human agencies as a consequence of this output; and impact indicates the extent to which a change in behaviour contributes to achieving policy goals. For example, the Tropical Forestry Action Program (TFAP) itself is *output*, new management practices in tropical forestry as a consequence of this program is *outcome* and the sustainable use of forest resources and the conservation of biodiversity as a result of these practices is impact. Now, if we want to assess the success of TFAP, 'output analysts' will be rather positive since many projects were designed and resources mobilized in the context of this program. 'Outcome analysts' will be probably more critical because one might question the behavioural consequences of these plans and resources in the field. 'Impact analysts' will definitely reach negative conclusions. After all, it is hard to link TFAP directly to the conservation of 'real' genes, species and habitats at the local level.

Today, it may appear common sense to claim that global forest politics have failed given the fact that deforestation rates have remained high throughout recent decades (Chaytor, 2001; FAO, 2001, 2006). However, such an assessment is based on the idea of 'policy impact' alone. Although it is legitimate and necessary to consider impacts in any assessment of policy success, as the sole focus it is limited. Firstly, we should not overlook what has been achieved in terms of plans, programs, resource mobilization and behavioural change. Secondly, there is generally no direct link between policy output (plans) and policy impact (effects), since there are usually many intervening factors and unanticipated obstacles to implementation (such as war, climate change, natural disasters, corruption, etc.). Hence, one cannot always blame the policy makers and their plans as the sole cause whenever their stated objectives are not fully achieved. Thirdly, considering a policy a failure on impact indicators alone, while output and outcome are still being produced, can undermine such policy making in general and may lead to unjustified mistrust and pessimism with regard to politics. Finally and most important, policy output (plans, programs, institutions) and outcome (behavioural changes) are necessary prerequisites for policy impacts (cons e rvation and sustainable use of forests) in the longer run.

# Perspectives in the policy sciences

Different interpretations of 'policy success' elates to the fact that different policy scientists apply different perspectives on the subject. Table 1 presents the four main perspectives in policy sciences from the current literature (based on: Abma and In 't Veld, 2001; Sabatier, 1999).

Perspective	Definition	Process	Success
Rationalism	Policy-as-plan	Policy cycle, phases	Effective plan
Network theory	Policy-as-action	Policy rounds, arenas	Network constitution
Institutionalism	Policy-as-rules	Path-dependency	Institution building
Constructivism	Policy-as-language	(Re)constitution of	Deliberate democracy
		policy discourses	

Table 1: Perspectives in the policy sciences

The first perspective is *rationalism*. The central idea is that formal policy makers are rational agencies, who are able to produce effective policy plans to solve or reduce societal problems and to organize a well-ordered policy process to prepare, formulate, implement and evaluate these policy plans (Dunn, 1994). Interpreting global forest policy, rationalists would probably not claim much success since many plans have hardly been implemented, executed and (seriously) evaluated so far (hence, no policy impacts). However, the rationalist tradition has been thoroughly criticized, not only in terms of the premises of rationalism, but also in terms of the phase-like policy process. An example of the former criticism can be found in the work of Anthony Giddens (1984). Like many others, Giddens argues that rationality of agencies is bounded. Moreover, humans are socially and culturally embedded, since they (often quite uncritically) adhere to given values, norms, rules, routines and ideas. As a consequence, human beings are less rational and the world is less manageable than rational choice theorists often assume.

Also, the 'rationalist' phase-like policy model has been criticized, for example by *network* theorists (Kickert et al., 1997). Contrary to the policy cycle model, the policy process in network theory is understood as an ongoing and dynamic social process, in which not only formal policy

makers play their role but also a broad range of private actors (scientists, interest groups, NGOs, civilians, etc.). Hence, a multi-actor model of policy making – proceeding in different, parallel and, to some extent, unplanned rounds and arenas – is put to the forefront. Central notions in the network literature are interactions and interdependencies between actors. As public actors are, to a large extent, dependent on private ones – for tax money, expertise, support, implementation of measures, etc. – they need to interact with them in processes of policy making. From the perspective of network theory, global forest policy seems quite successful, as mixed policy networks have been formed and extended since the early 1980s (implying policy outcome).

The policy network perspective has become very popular in the policy sciences although it has also been criticized. According to the institutional perspective (the third approach in Table 1), network theorists tend to overemphasize the role of agency vis-à-vis structures (Van Tatenhove and Leroy, 1995). Moreover, several network theorists prioritize dynamics over stability. Such a voluntarist approach neglects the broader institutional context, which tends to generate continuity in outcomes rather than change and, as a consequence, produces patterns of 'path-dependency'. Institutions can be defined as widely accepted rules and roles, both formal and informal, both visible and latent, which enable some human behaviours and constrain others (adapted from: Schmidt, 2005; Van Tatenhove, 1993). Institutional theorists might claim that global forest policy has shown successful institution building, since many new rules have been produced in the last 25 years, from new principles on sustainable forest management to certification programs (implying policy output).

As a response to the dominance of materialist ontologies in the 1970s and 1980s (e.g. rational choice in the economic sciences and neo-Marxism in the political sciences), a 'a rgumentative turn' has taken place in the social sciences (Fischer, 2003). This is often labelled as 'discourse analysis' or 'social-constructivism'. The central assumption is that social agents give meaning to the world through interaction and communication and on the basis of shared beliefs, ideas, concepts, frames, narratives, etc (Dry zek, 1997; Hajer, 1995). Such constructs, however, are not fixed over time. For example, while economic affairs in Europe were mainly considered from a Keynesian perspective in the 1970s and 1980s, monetarist and neo-liberal thinking gained dominance in the 1990s (Schmidt, 2005). From the perspective of constructivism, one could claim (some) success for global forest policy. Se veral (new) discourses on biodiversity, sustainability and governance have been produced in relatively open, participatory policy processes (implying policy output see below). In other words: there has been some 'deliberate democracy' arising in the global forest arena.9

#### Discursive institutionalism

The above overviewof policy perspectives is, of course, a caricature. Many nuances of the different views have been lost. Combinations of perspectives have also been overlooked. In this section, I will combine and elaborate upon certain perspectives. The reason for elaborating on more than one perspective is that I would like to find a middle-road between *voluntarism* and *determinism*, on the one hand, and *material -ism* and *idealism*, on the other. The first is achieved by adopting a 'nuanced' institutional theory, the second by combining such an institutional perspective with discourse analysis. Following Schmidt (2005), I would like to label the result of

these moves 'discursive institutionalism'.

As a starting point, I prefer to build on institutional theory. I share the criticisms on rational choice theory as expressed above. Yet institutional theory bears the danger of ending up in the other extreme of determinism, namely that rules and roles are considered to shape human conduct unilaterally. Therefore, a more nuanced version of institutionalism is preferred in this address. This is achieved by building on structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). This approach argues that institutions are social-historical constructs that are 'internalized' in human conduct and memory. As a consequence, institutions make the action repertoire of people rather stable and predictable (think of husband and wife in traditional marriage). At the same time, it is assumed that rules and roles are continuously 'monitored' by people – openly and critically in some cases, latently and routinely in others - from which a desire for institutional change might develop (think of new types of partnership between men and women or of marriage among gays and lesbians). Such change, though, is generally not easily realized because most institutions are strongly anchored in society, stretching over time and space, and 'overshadowing' individual life histories. Institutional change, therefore, needs collective action as well as enabling circumstances, such as economic prosperity, social crises or discursive shifts in apprehending reality.

This latter notion – discursive shifts – brings us to the other schism of materialism versus idealism. More and more, the role of ideas and discourses is emphasized in institutional theory (Schmidt, 2005). Central to this perspective are the effects of new ideas and discourses on existing institutions. Also, 'policy success' is interpreted along similar lines. The question is whether, how and to what extent

'discursive institutions' – i.e. institutions which are responsive to new ideas, deliberation and change – are present, emerging or designed (Schanz, 2002). The main backgrounds of discursive institutionalism are both *theoretical* – bringing in more dynamics in institutionalism – and *em – pirical* – reflecting the real events of institutional change and collapse, such as the reform of the welfare state in the West and the end of Communism in the East.<sup>10</sup>

# Policy arrangement approach (PAA)

Discursive institutionalism is a so-called grand theory since it is not directly related to a certain empirical field or a certain scientific discipline. To make such theories relevant and applicable in a particular domain, so-called middlerange theories are needed. In order to make discursive institutionalism relevant and applicable in the policy sciences, the Policy Arrangement Approach (PAA) was chosen (Arts and Leroy, 2006; Van Tatenhove et al., 2000). Just as discursive institutionalism, this approach tries to find a middle-road between actors and structure, on the one hand, and idealism and materialism, on the other, but at a 'lower' discipline-specific level of theorizing. A policy arrangement can be defined as the way in which a certain policy domain is shaped in terms of actors, rules, resources and discourses in a bounded time-space context. Key to this definition are the four dimensions of a policy arrangement: actors, rules, resources, and discourses. I will shortly deal with these oneby-one although it should be kept in mind that the four dimensions are strongly interwoven.

Following others, the PAA first of all assumes that policy dynamics often cause actors to group in coalitions (Hajer, 1995; Sabatier, 1999). A *policy coalition* consists of a number of players who share, want to share or *have* to

share policy ideas, power resources and/or rules of the game. As a consequence, they jointly engage in policy processes. Secondly, the rules of the game delineate a policy domain (Kickert et al., 1997). They define the way the game should be played and within which boundaries. Which values and norms are legitimate in the given domain? How may issues be raised, agendas set, policies formulated and decisions made? And through which procedures, allocation of tasks and division of competencies? The third dimension of power resources is based on the idea that resources are intrinsically linked to the concept of power (Giddens, 1984). In general, power has to be regarded, on the one hand, as the ability of actors to mobilise resources in order to achieve certain outcomes in social relations, and, on the other, as the asymmetrical distribution of resources in a society, implying various positions of autonomy and dependency between actors. The final dimension refers to policy discourse. The PAA defines policy discourses as interpretative schemes, ranging from formal policy concepts to popular story lines, which give meaning to a policy issue and domain (adapted from: Dryzek, 1997; Fischer, 2003; Hajer, 1995).

In addition to the four dimensions, the definition of a policy arrangement refers to 'bounded time-space contexts'. This last phrase is added to emphasize the dynamics in policy arrangements: they may vary with time and location. As such, the issue of *continuity and change* in policy practices is introduced. In the PAA, this question is addressed at several levels. A distinction is made between changes induced at the agency level of policy *entrepreneurs*, who intentionally want to change (elements of) policy arrangements – for improving policy making, incorporating new ideas, integrating new stakeholders, etc. – or at the structural level of *po* 

litical modernization (Van Tatenhove et al., 2000). This latter concept was introduced to link policy making to meta-institutional change in societies, on the one hand, and to relate policy analysis to social theory, on the other.

Political modernization is defined as shifting relationships between state, market and civil society in political domains of societies, within countries and beyond, implying new conceptions and structures of governance (Arts and Leroy, 2006). The central argument is that 'doing politics' in - what Beck (2000) calls - the first stage of modernity is rather different from what politics is in the second stage (this shift is somewhere situated in the late 1960s, early 1970s). In the first phase, politics is closely linked to the nation-state model, the regulatory state and the 'manageable society'. The state was considered to be the main regulatory body within its boundaries, both within capitalist and socialist societies. At the same time, society was believed to be highly 'manageable' by state regulation. The second phase of modernity is closely linked to what some call post-modernity, and others late or reflexive modernity. This phase is characterized by state failure, globalization, individualization, post-materialization and the emergence of new ecological risks. It has given birth to new forms of governance: regional and global governance by international institutions, network governance by public and private actors, self-governance by communities and private regulation by market parties (Pierre, 2000). It is not difficult to imagine that these novel forms of governance have implied new types of policy arrangements at the level of specific issues.

# Global forest policy: new discourses

After some theoretical elaboration, I would now like to turn once again to the 'real' world of global forest politics with the aim of analysing it from the perspectives of discursive institutionalism and the policy arrangement approach. The former implies an analysis of how new discourses might have influenced institutions in global forest politics, the latter offers four dimensions – discourses, actors, rules, resources – to make this analysis more domain-specific. Moreover, changes in the forest domain can be potentially linked to overall patterns of social change ('political modernization'). Also, I will assess whether 'discursive institutions' were present, emerging or designed.

Within the global forest regime, three (relatively) new discourses have emerged since the early 1980s: these concern biodiversity, sustainable development and governance. I will briefly deal with these one-by-one. The concept of biodiversity was first introduced in 1986 at the conference 'The National Forum on BioDiversity', which was held in Washington, DC, USA (Jeffries, 1997; Wilson, 2006). This conference not only dealt with the richness of life on earth and the threat to and extinction of species, but also with the economics, functions, values and conservation of biodiversity. These subjects demonstrate that the concept has never had a purely biological connotation. Another source for the term biodiversity has been the IUCN (Arts, 1998). This international nature conservation organization put the need for a global biodiversity convention on the agenda in 1984 and wrote a draft treaty thereafter. Inspired by this, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) established an intergovernmental negotiation committee to design a legally-binding global biodiversity treaty. This led, after complex and difficult negotiations, to the adoption of the Framework Convention on Biological Diversity in 1992, which was signed by most countries at the UNCED in Rio de Janeiro in the same year. Its aim is to conserve biodiversity worldwide, to use it in a sustainable way and to share its benefits equally.

Compared to earlier definitions, the concept of biodiversity is now interpreted in a much broader and more integrated way; it now not only refers to species diversity, but also to the diversity of genes and habitats as well. From the beginning, much of the discussion surrounding biodiversity focused on the tropical rainforests. According to biologists, more than 50% of the terrestrial species on earth are found in this ecosystem, while it only covers about 7% of the Earth's land surface (Wilson, 2006). Given this richness, processes of deforestation and degeneration might account for an annual loss of about 5000 species. Whether these figures are correct or not, forests and biodiversity have always been strongly related issues. Therefore, the 'forest crisis' has, to a large extent, been framed in the language of biodiversity (loss).

Sustainable development, the second concept of the new forestry discourses, became tremendously popular at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. This was largely due to the publication of the Brundtland report Our Common Future and the preparation of the UNCED conference in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, although it should be realized that the concept was definitely not new (Johnson, 1993; WCED, 1987). Its origins go back to German forestry of the 19th century (Wiersum, 1999). At this time, the notion of 'sustained yield' was introduced to balance human needs for forest products, on the one hand, and the production capacity of the forests, on the other ('harvest equals biomass growth'). At a later stage, the concept of sustainable yield was broadened. Ecological and social dimensions were added. The concept of 'sustainable development' first appeared in the 1980 World Conservation Strategy

(WCS) of IUCN, UNEP and WWF (Arts, 1994). However, its meaning was mainly conservation-oriented in the WCS, whereas the Brundtland Commission defined sustainable development as a way to integrate economy and ecology. 'Producing more with less' is one of the key messages in the report. Through rapid development and immediate and worldwide application of environmental technology, economic growth, environmental performance and the conservation of natural resources should go hand in hand, benefiting both present and future generations. This belief in 'win-win-options' is one of the core assumptions of the (mainstream) sustainable development discourse. It is therefore no surprise that it was warmly welcomed by governments, business and the environmental movements alike. It was also well received in the forest sector because it mobilized stakeholders who had often previously been opponents: loggers, wood processors, timber traders, nature conservationist, rich consumer countries, poor producing countries, etc. The basic idea of sustainable development has been to integrate the use of resources and the conservation of biodiversity in new approaches of 'sustainable forest management' (SFM). Of course, this concept has been controversial and has hardly or partly been implemented so far, but it has also been firmly institutionalized in our minds, organizations and policies. We can no longer simply do away with it.

A third relevant discourse to understand the development of the global forest regime is the one of 'governance'. To most, governance refers to a paradigm shift in the way current societies and organizations are governed (Pierre, 2000). Due to processes such as increasing state failure (e.g. bureaucratization, implementation deficit, and democratic deficit), market liberalization, internationalization, decen-

tralization and emancipation, the old paradigm of topdown, state-led, 'command and control' ways of steering no longer suffice. Instead, new forms of multi-actor and multi-level governance and new types of policy instruments have been propagated: network-like arrangements of public and private actors, self-regulation by market organizations, civic-private partnerships, emission trading schemes, covenants, certification programs, etc. (Kickert et al., 1997; Bendell, 2000). Some refer to this as a 'shift from government to governance' or as 'governance without government'. In forestry and forest politics, new governance arrangements have been introduced too (Meidinger, 2002). For example: community forestry, partnerships between NGOs and business, voluntary agreements, and certification programs. However, the concept of 'governance' is just as contested as 'sustainable development'; there are too many meanings floating around, 'the retreat of the state' is too hastily proclaimed and the notion of power (asymmetry) is under-theorized (Pierre, 2000).

#### **New coalitions**

In retrospect, one might claim that the biodiversity discourse split the forest community into two 'discourse coalitions' (Hajer, 1995) in the early 1980s: one proclaiming a global forest crisis, dramatic biodiversity loss and the need for massive conservation efforts (biologists, NGOs, UNEP and many developed countries), and the other focusing on forestry, economics, development, and trade (foresters, industry, UNCTAD and most developing countries). At a later stage, though, the sustainable development discourse 'helped' to (partly) merge these coalitions, since this discourse is built on the idea that economics and ecology can be integrated. More and more, foresters and conservation-

ist agreed on approaches of 'sustainable forest management' (SFM) as means to integrate the use of forest resources, on the one hand, and the conservation of forest biodiversity, on the other. Moreover, the governance discourse produced new tools to give organizational shape to this integration process, civic-private partnerships and certification programs being the most prominent. This all came together in the Forest Stewardship Council, being both a partnership of NGOs and business as well as a certification program (Bendel, 2000). As a result, 'old enemies' - environmental movements and (often multinational) firms - started working together. In an earlier publication, I tried to analyze the reasons why these collaborations came about (Arts, 2002). On the one hand, environmental movements became strongly professionalized and realized that industry was not only part of the problem, but also part of the solution. Consequently, 'market environmentalism' was no longer a dirty concept. On the other hand, businesses also realized that fulfilling their social responsibilities was not necessarily a bad proposition. Besides 'profit', 'people' and 'planet' are important assets, too (which is called Triple-P). Moreover, social corporate responsibility (SCR) can be good for money-making and reputation-building, given growing consumer awareness.

In terms of coalitions, we now seem to be entering a new phase in global forest politics. Originally, the public sector was rather dominant, but most governmental and intergovernmental policies failed, according to many NGOs and experts in the 1980s. As a consequence, private partnerships and community initiatives took over in the 1990s to fill the 'governance gap' (Bendel, 2000; Wiersum, 1999). Now, governments are re-entering the scene in a number of ways, playing both traditional and innovative roles

(Visseren-Hamakers and Glasbergen, 2006). Firstly, governments have started to play active roles in partnerships and certification programs, for example, PECF (European countries) and MTCC (Malaysia). These were already referred to earlier in this inaugural address. Secondly, governments have also (partly) reformulated the debate from sustainability to legality in the FLEG processes. And, finally, governments (and other stakeholders) have realized that private initiatives alone can never achieve sustainability on a larger scale. Governments are simply needed to secure legality and security and to combat corruption and misuse. These activities refer to the more classical functions of the state (Pierre, 2000). As a result, we now see the emergence of mixed coalitions of governments, NGOs and businesses in a (difficult and controversial) search for sustainability and legality in global forestry, wood processing and timber trade alike. Hence, a 'hybridization' of government and gov ernance is taking place in global forest politics today (Arts and Leroy, 2006).

### New rules of the game

Binding law and rule making and control of compliance, both at the national and international level, are the classical approaches of governments. As said, these have been challenged and, to some extent, replaced by other types of rules and enforcement, also in the forest domain. Governments have introduced *voluntary* rules, and market and civil society have established *private* rules (Meidinger, 2002). For example, states have agreed on the voluntary Target 2000 in the ITTO and on the formulation of non-binding National Forest Programs (NFPs) in the UNFF. Enforcement is guarded by communication and deliberation among governments with NGOs playing the role of watchdog. To be

honest, these communicative types of enforcement have not been very successful in the forest dossier so far (but nor was the command and control approach of states before).

Besides public-voluntary ones, private rules, such as certification programs (FSC, SFI), have been introduced. Here, independent, private systems of monitoring, verification and accreditation have been set up to build up credibility among producers and consumers (Cashore et al., 2004.). These systems appear relatively successful, at least more successful in terms of enforcing compliance than the public-voluntary approaches. Yet, the scope of the private rule system is more limited – as we have seen above – because it does cover nearly enough of the countries, firms, forest areas and timber markets around the world. More promising then might be the combination of public and private rules. Expertise and commitment of private actors, on the one hand, and support and facilitation by governments, on the other, could produce the optimal mix for 'smart regulation'.

Rules of the game, however, refer to more than just (formal) law and rule making. It is also about access rules, interaction rules and policy styles (Kickert et al., 1997). Regarding these, a change can be observed in global forest politics over the last 25 years. Whereas the domain in the early 1980s resembled what Keohane and Nye (2000) calls the 'elite club model of intergovernmental politics', the domain has now been opened. Concepts such as participation, multi-stakeholder dialogue and interactive policy making have been introduced in this area as well. For example, NGOs could play more prominent roles in intergovernmental negotiations in the 1990s than in the 1980s (Arts, 1998). The same goes for other stakeholders, like indigenous peoples. Yet this issue of participation remains

delicate. For example, NGOs today feel excluded, for a large part, by governments from the several FLEG processes. Hence, while there seems to be a trend towards more open policy styles, 'real access' has to be fought for and defended repeatedly in each new negotiation.

## New power relations

Given the interconnectedness of the four dimensions of a policy arrangement, it is safe to assume that the changes in discourses, coalition formation and rule making in global forest politics have also affected power relations. What is the most striking is the emerging power of non-state actors vis-à-vis states. To mention just one example, nature conservation organizations like IUCN and WWF are referred to in the above as: (1) having influenced the ITTA agreement, (2) having co-framed the biodiversity discourse, (3) having influenced the Framework Convention on Biological Diversity, (4) having established the Forest Stewardship Council, and (5) having introduced the concept of 'sustainable development'. Consequently, these NGOs exhibit decisional, discursive and regulatory power, as I have argued elsewhere (Arts, 2003). The first type of power refers to political influence: the extent to which NGOs are able to influence political decision-making by states. The second type is defined as the capacity of NGOs to (co)frame political discourses. Finally, the third type refers to the NGO capacity to design private rules themselves, like labelling schemes.

Of course, one should not overstate the power of NGOs vis-à-vis states and business. For example, the latter has also considerably influenced the biodiversity regime (Clapp, 2002) while states remain the most important 'power containers' in international politics (Pierre, 2000).

Moreover, NGOs score differently over the various types of power, with decisional power being the least probable. Directly influencing intergovernmental decision-making remains difficult after all (Arts et al., 2001). More power is probably exercised by NGOs in the discursive and regulatory realms. Since these types of power are as important as the decisional one for regime building (Pattberg, 2006), it can be concluded that global forest politics has, to a large extent, recently been shaped by non-state actors. It remains to be seen, though, whether this power balance will again shift towards states in the near future now that they seem to have regained some new initiatives and roles (e.g. FLEG).

# Political modernization in the global forest domain

To what extent do the above changes in discourses, coalitions, rules of the game and power relations - hence, the change of the global forest policy arrangement as a whole match with the hypothesized trend of political modernization? This process was defined as shifting relationships between state, market and civil society in political domains of societies, within countries and beyond, implying new conceptions and structures of governance. Without a doubt, this overall trend has manifested itself in the global forest regime. We see the emergence of new governance discourses, of new private and mixed rule systems, of new coalitions and of new power relations between public and private actors. At the same time, we have recently observed a re-entering of the state and a general plea for public regulation. A hybrid of *governance* and *government* is emerging. Therefore, given this process of 'hybridization', the basic idea of the political modernization thesis - a shift from 'first' to 'second' modernity - seems to be falsified. However, this thesis should not be interpreted as a simple transition from one era

to the other  $(A \rightarrow B)$ . In fact, new ways of 'doing politics' always build on old institutional substrata by which the latter a re redesigned at the same time  $(A \rightarrow A'B)$ . If we mean *this* by political modernization (and I advocate we do), then it is reflected in the global forest regime.

#### Conclusion

Deforestation and forest degradation remain troubling global problems. We are still far from forest biodiversity conservation, sustainable forest management, efficient wood processing and legal timber trade at a global scale (whatever these concepts may mean in different contexts). Yet, I do not share the 'easy' conclusion that global forest politics are therefore a failure. Although real policy impacts are scarce at this point in time, impressive policy output and policy outcome have been produced. One might think of the many policy plans, policy discourses and institutional arrangements that have been constructed and designed since the early 1980s. Also, human behaviour related to forests has changed. Many developing countries have recently decentralized the management of their forests, several timber producers have adapted their harvest and production processes, ever more Western consumers have started buying labelled timber products and global forest policy making has become much more participatory and non-governmental in nature. Overall, the world has managed to design a discursive-institutional framework for global forest politics in the last 25 years, which has turned out to be consequential in terms of human behaviour. Such a framework - with all its strengths and weaknesses and with all its intended effects and unintended side-effects – is a necessary prerequisite for having policy impacts – forest biodiversity conservation, on the one hand, and sustainable use of forest resources, on the other – in the long run.

# Research agenda

Research and education of Wageningen's Forest and Nature Conservation Policy Group covers a wide range of themes: from policy making at different administrative levels to management and organization in firms, and from community forestry in tropical countries to the perceptions of nature held by the Dutch. I like that diversity and consider it a strength of our group. It is therefore not in the field of empirical themes that I seek greater coherence, especially since the choice of research topics should reflect what's happening in society. Where I do seek greater coherence is at the level of theory. Above, I presented a framework which I deem relevant for the development of our research and education. Moreover, I believe that this approach will interest other policy-related research programs at WUR too. First, it offers a perspective in which the key topics of today's policy sciences are addressed (coalitions, discourses, rules and power; actor-structure *problematique*; argumentative turn). Secondly, a nuanced perspective on policy success and failure is offered, which goes beyond counting species or hectares as the only indicators of success. Besides such policy impact, policy output (plans, institutions, discourses) and policy outcome (behavioural changes) are also addressed as aspects of success. Thirdly, my approach offers an interesting scientific niche in Dutch public administration and policy sciences. Whereas the interpretative policy analysis is for example strong in Amsterdam (UvA) and the institutional approach is quite dominant in Nijmegen (RU), the discursive-institutional perspective offers a novel middleroad. Finally, the approach has already proved useful for the applied sciences, as demonstrated by its recent use by Alterra and the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.

# Words of gratitude

Ladies and Gentlemen, in the above address I have taken a position against voluntarist policy analysis, as if policy effects can be fully understood by analyzing individual preferences, actions and successes alone. Since policy makers are always part of broader social networks and discursiveinstitutional arrangements, co-shaping their behaviour and co-determining outcomes, our theoretical and empirical focus should be broader, too. The same goes for social practices other than policy making. Take, for example, the appointment of a professor at a university. Of course, such an appointment is also a personal achievement. But, without enabling networks and arrangements, any individual is simply lost. That is something that I have strongly experienced during the procedure of my appointment, since the networks and the rules of the game have been quite favourable to me. And many of you in the Wageningen University Aula today have contributed to this enabling environment. Therefore, some words of gratitude to all of you and to some of you in particular.

- Rector Magnificus, members of the Executive Board and members of the Appointment Committee: thank you for appointing me as the person to give shape to the Chair of Forest and Nature Conservation Policy. I will do my best to make a success of it.
- Colleagues and students of the chair group FNP: we have been collaborating since the beginning of this year and this has been a very fruitful, inspiring and pleasant collaboration. Thank you so much! Let's make our chair group an even better place to stay, work and study in the future. Two people I would like to mention particularly: Freerk Wiersum and Marielle van der Zouwen. The first was the Head of the group before I came and I would like

- to thank you, Freerk, for a smooth transfer of tasks and responsibilities and for our fine cooperation. The second, Marielle, read a draft of this inaugural address and provided valuable suggestions for improvement. Thanks!
- WUR colleagues outside FNP, particularly those of the Forest Ecology and Management Group, Resource Ecology Group, Nature Conservation and Plant Ecology Group, Environmental Policy Group, Public Administration and Policy Group, Centre Landscape, Department of Environmental Sciences, Department of Social Sciences, Education Institute, Mansholt Graduate School, CERES, Alterra and WOT: we have started to collaborate and I look forward to intensifying this cooperation. To me, good scientific practice is based on exchange and interaction, not on 'inward looking' and a defensive attitude. One person I would like to mention particularly: Frits Mohren. Frits, you are my counter 'forest professor' and although we are in different Centres and - soon - in different buildings, I look forward to intensifying our collaboration.
- Dear Peter Griffith and Douglas Sheil: thank you for editing the English language of this inaugural address.
- Dear colleagues from the field of Dutch forest and nature conservation policy: many of you I already met (representatives of Bosschap, Unie van Bosgroepen, Staatsbosbeheer, Probos, Natuurmonumenten, Ministerie van LNV, amongst others), several not yet. I hope we will do so soon. I look forward to extend the cooperation between my chair group and the broader professional field. In my opinion, science should not only be relevant for itself, but for society at large.
- Previous colleagues of the chair group Political Sciences of the Environment and of the Research Program

- 'Governance and Places', Radboud University: looking back, I now realize how much I learned in Nijmegen, scientifically and professionally. This experience has definitely paved the way to my professorship here in Wageningen. Thank you all! Three persons stand out: Pieter Leroy, Arnoud Lagendijk and Duncan Liefferink. Pieter was my boss, but he gave me the opportunity and freedom to develop myself the way I did. Arnoud was the colleague with whom I co-ordinated GaP for several years. His organizational capacity, scientific insights and chaotic style put my own way of doing in an enlightening perspective. And Duncan became one of my closest colleagues in Nijmegen, professionally, since he is an expert in European politics, and personally, because he is such a nice guy.
- Dear Leon Wecke and Bert Bomert: I started my scientific career at your institute the Peace Research Centre in Nijmegen in 1989. It was really fun to work with you, in a sort of anarchist ambiance. At the same time, my stay there was also very productive. A marvellous combination to be attributed to you.
- Dear Klaas Bouwer, Nico Nelissen and Piet Verschuren: you were my promotores and superbly coached me. Limitless freedom, on the one hand, subtle steering, on the other. You taught me what social science is all about and gave me the confidence that I was capable of doing it myself.
- Dear Jan van Tatenhove: Jan, you are my 'scientific buddy'! Without you, I could never have presented the address the way I did today. You are the founding father of the policy arrangement approach (PAA). Of course, I and others have added new elements and perspectives, but for me, the PAA will always remain the JTA: the 'Jan van

- Tatenhove Approach'. You have also become one of my best friends in the meantime. Jan, my greatest gratitude.
- Dear Frans Bongers and Theo Brock: you continuously chatted about WUR during our car pool adventures over the last eight months. Thank you so much. Now, I know how to survive better in this highly complex social environment.
- Dear members of the rock band *Justus*: 'music is my best friend, and so are you!' I have an inclination to work too hard and exploit my brains too much, but then there is always the safe haven of *Justus*. Great!
- Dear friends and family: I will keep it short because there are too many names to mention. Thanks for having created an enabling environment for my career. But more important: thanks for just being there, particularly my father (until 1987), my mother, Gertie and her family, Dorothé, Family Janssen, René, Jeroen and Laurent.
- Miriam, my dearest partner, how to thank you without falling into clichés... Although you terminated a promising scientific career yourself long ago, this did not end inspiring and enlightening debates. Moreover, you are an expert on group dynamics. Very informative for an analphabetic in this field, very valuable for someone who is supposed to manage a chair group. Finally, sharing our lives is really great. For that and also for making work bearable when science goes less easy, thank you so much!

I have spoken.

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#### Notes

- Deforestation figures are contested. The 1980s were characterized by fierce debates among 'alarmists' (like Myers) and 'realists' (for example the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). Their estimations differed considerably. I adopted the 'realist' figures here.
- This address focuses only on the main topics in global forest politics and is, therefore, not a complete discussion on this subject. Initiatives, programs and bodies not dealt with are, for example, the G7 Pilot Program for the Brazilian Amazon (PPB), the World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development (WCFSD), the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO) and several NGO campaigns (e.g. World Rainforest Movement).
- This agreement was renegotiated, renewed and again adopted in 1994 and 2006 respectively.
- 4 ....although current WTO-rules recognize exceptions, for example, if there are severe (and scientifically assessed) risks for human health and/or the environment.

- Official name: 'Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests'.
- 6 Source: http://www.fern.org/
- 7 Source: www.fsc.org
- These terms are not necessarily synonymous since social-constructivism can mean different things. Sometimes it is considered a research *object*, i.e. the social construction of discourses by groups in society, and sometimes a research *epistemology*, i.e. the co-production of knowledge by scientists in interaction with those (lay) people who are studied (Crotty, 1998).
- Here, it should be mentioned that many policy scientists deliberately refrain from any evaluative judgement and keep to policy analysis only. This goes for all four perspectives, but particularly for institutionalism and constructivism.
- To prevent any misunderstanding, it is *not* claimed here that other schools of institutionalism *exclude* the role of ideas and discourses. On the contrary, these institutional perspectives consider ideas/discourses as *part* of the institutional context, and not, or less so, as 'independent variables' *themselves* that can induce institutional change.