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1.1 Forest governance: mainstream and critical views

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Introduction

"Forest governance" has become a popular term in forest sciences and practices. A Google search in January 2012 produced about 430,000 hits, and a Google Scholar search about 4,000 hits. Generally, the concept refers to new approaches to forest governance that go beyond the confines of the state, such as policy networks, certification schemes, corporate social responsibility, public participation, community forestry, markets for ecosystem services, and public-private partnerships.

These approaches include both governmental and non-governmental actors at various levels, from the local to the global. These public-private modes of governance are believed to be more capable of managing public "goods and bads" related to forests than conventional governmental policy. Over the years, however, a critical literature on forest governance has also developed that puts this optimism into perspective.

THE TERM "FOREST GOVERNANCE" HAS VARIOUS MEANINGS: FROM STEERING IN GENERAL TO NEW MODES OF GOVERNANCE THAT GO BEYOND THE CONFINES OF THE STATE.

Some people criticize the naïve belief that the introduction of new technologies and nstitutions can solve the complex problems underlying deforestation and forest degradation. Others question the lack of attention paid by governance authors to the issues of power and domination. As alternatives, theories such as political ecology and governmentality have been applied to the forest policy field.

This article aims to highlight the theoretical debates on governance, forest governance and forest governmentality. With this, we hope to contribute to bridging the gap between forest governance debates in the social sciences and those among practitioners.

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Governance

The key buzzword in political sciences and public administration for the last two decades has been "governance" (Kjaer 2004; Pierre 2000; Pierre and Peters 2000). Recently, the concept has acquired various meanings, four of which are briefly addressed here (Table 1).

Table 1. Four conceptualizations of governance

Conceptualization	Description
Broad	Governing by, with and without the state
Strict	Governing beyond the confines of the state
Multilevel	Governing at multiple levels (local to global)
Good governance	Reform programs for improving governance

In its broadest interpretation, governance is about the many ways in which public and private actors from the state, market and/or civil society govern public issues at multiple scales, autonomously or in mutual interaction. Hence, this interpretation refers to governing by, governing with and governing without the state. Consequently, the concept acknowledges the actual and potential role of both public and private actors in providing public "goods" — such as welfare, health and environment — and in managing or solving public "bads" — such as poverty, disease and pollution.

This broad definition of governance is often confused with a more strict interpretation. Strict governance refers to a paradigm shift in the way in which we govern societies and organizations today (Pierre and Peters 2000). According to this interpretation, the old top-down, state-led, command-and-control way of governance has lost its legitimacy and effectiveness.

According to this conceptualization, the "big" government of the Northern welfare state lost credibility during the economic crisis of the 1980s, while its bureaucracy and old-boys networks raised questions about efficiency and democracy (Pierre 2000). As a consequence, public administrations became subject to intense reform programmes, and new modes of governance emerged (Kjaer 2004). Examples are network-like arrangements, self-regulation by businesses, private and public-private partnerships, emission-trading schemes and certification programmes (Agrawal et al. 2008; Kickert et al. 1997; Visseren-Hamakers and Glasbergen 2007). Most refer to this development as "a shift from government to governance" (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992), implying that authority and competencies have moved away from the state to other bodies, such as international organizations, NGOs and businesses (Pierre and Peters 2000).

Contrary to the interpretations above that emphasize the multi-actor character of governance, the third conceptualization — multi-level governance (MLG) — highlights its multi-level character. This concept was introduced in the realm of European studies to refer to the multi-level character of EU policy-making, consisting of European institutions

on the one hand and member states on the other (Hooghe and Marks 2001). Later, the MLG concept was also used in the fields of sub-national, national and global policy analysis to argue that the old distinction between domestic and international politics has become blurred and outdated (Held and McGrew 2002). Also, the original government-centred approach to MLG by Hooghe and Marks has been broadened to include non-state actors. After all, local authorities and NGOs are believed to affect global and European politics, whereas global agreements and European directives are thought to have direct impacts on local practices of different actors (Arts et al. 2009).

Another category is "good governance," which is the promotion of reform of the public sector and/or of corporate management in accordance with a number of good governance criteria, such as cost-effectiveness, transparency, accountability and participation, among others advocated by the European Union (EU), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (Kjaer 2004; Woods 2000). An example of a good governance programme is new public management (NPM), which applies business principles to public administration for improved cost-effectiveness; another example is good corporate governance (GCG), which applies principles of government to business practices for improved accountability.

Forest governance

Traditionally, the state has been dominant in governing forests, not only in Europe (let alone in the Socialist East before 1989), but also in the colonies and in the post-colonial era (Scott 1998). In order to prevent a Tragedy of the Commons (Hardin 1961), it was believed that the state should regulate ownership and access to natural resources such as forests. Otherwise, private resource users — in their continuous strive for personal gain — would jointly erode the resource base.

In many cases, however, colonial and post-colonial as well as capitalist and socialist states proved to be even worse managers of the forests:

- they over-exploited the resource, often in conflict with local livelihoods and with the state's own conservation objectives;
- they issued concessions to private companies or public enterprises without any effective monitoring mechanisms in place; and
- they were absent as managers, leaving the forests open to often illegal local use (Humphreys 2006; Peluso 1994).

This situation led to protests by NGOs (who claimed the need for forest conservation), opposition by grass-roots movements (who fought for local forest rights), and pressure by international donors (who advocated sustainable forest management) (Bose et al. 2012; Agrawal et al. 2008). These reforms can be interpreted by all four conceptualizations of governance discussed above (see Table 1), and thus can be called "forest governance" or "good forest governance."

Current forest governance comes mainly in three forms: decentralization, participation and marketization.

Decentralization

Decentralization involves the de-concentration of administrative competencies and/or the transfer of political authority from the central state to sub-national administrations (Ribot et al. 2006). The local administration gains technical capacity and/or formal authority from the central state and is held accountable by local communities.

Decentralization is therefore believed to bring politics closer to the people, increase policy effectiveness, and enhance democratic checks and balances at the sub-national level (which are also important prerequisites for good governance). Decentralization has become very influential worldwide in the forest sector, although some people question both the intentions and performance of such decentralization programmes in forestry (Ribot et al. 2010).

Participation

The central idea behind Participatory Forest Management (PFM) is that local management of forests, either by communities themselves or jointly with regional forest departments, can be as or more efficient and effective than central state institutions in conserving and using forest resources. India, Nepal, Mexico, Bolivia, Kenya and Tanzania have pioneered different forms of PFM since the early 1990s.

Many countries, from Ethiopia to Albania, followed. The results of PFM have so far been reported as "mixed" (Charnley and Poe 2007; Mustalahti and Lund 2010). Where success is reported, it usually relates to the forest condition rather than to enhancing local livelihoods or empowering local people. Also, PFM has been subject to serious power struggles. Often, only local elites benefit, and conflicts between forest officials and communities over valuable timber resources and land rights have frequently been reported.

Marketization

The third form of forest governance relates to marketization. One example is forest certification (Cashore et al. 2004; Visseren-Hamakers and Glasbergen 2007). This entails market-based mechanisms for independent labelling and monitoring that are meant to guarantee to both consumers and producers that timber products originate from sustainably managed forests. One of the first organizations in this field was the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), established in 1993. Because this was an NGO-led initiative, with stringent requirements for sustainability, other industry initiatives followed, the largest today being the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC). Together, these two initiatives now cover more than 300 million hectares of forests around the world and thousands of companies and products, although most of them are located and traded in the global North.

Another example of marketization is Payment for Ecosystem Services, or PES (Constanza et al. 1997; Farber et al. 2002). The core idea is that forest and other ecosystems provide services to society, such as water regulation, soil protection and climate regulation, which are currently not accounted for in the economic system or in policy. Giving these services a

price allows them to compete more equally with services that are already accounted for in budgets, such as timber production.

REDD+ is an application of PES in forest governance (Levin et al. 2008; see article 4.1). The main idea of REDD+ is that developing countries are paid for their forest conservation and management practices by earning carbon credits and trading them on international carbon market; developed countries can buy the credits to implement their commitments under the post-Kyoto Agreement, which is currently being negotiated under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Currently, REDD+ is being piloted in a number of projects through bilateral initiatives (e.g., between Norway and Indonesia) and multilateral initiatives (through the UN and World Bank) (Visseren-Hamakers et al. 2011).

Forest governmentality

The concept of forest governance has been criticized, particularly for its managerial and instrumental approach, its lack of theorizing about politics and power, and its optimism about institutional design and the following of rules (Bevir 2010; Ostrom 1990). Too easily, governance analysts believe that "apolitical" mechanisms and markets can do the public job, based on cooperation, trust, expertise and exchange. Nonetheless, the governance of controversial issues often includes interest-driven bargaining, social conflicts and power games. In addition, those who govern through the new governance modes are often not elected democratically.

In order to address these issues, other more critical approaches have been developed. Cleaver (2002), for example, shows that communities do not simply adopt externally designed resource institutions, such as PFM, but combine them with socially embedded rules, norms and beliefs, or even reject them (De Koning 2011). Second, political ecologists focus on power, inequality and injustice in what they call late capitalist and neoliberal resource management (Bryant and Baily 1997; Peluso 1994). These authors do not believe that a shift to governance will contribute to poverty alleviation or environmental justice. For them, governance represents not a shift away from, but a continuation of, late capitalism and neoliberalism.

A third critical approach builds upon the notion of "governmentality" (Arts et al. 2009; Dean 2010; Foucault 2000). This concept refers to the way that modern society and its subjects are governed. Crucial in this approach is that current government by the state and self-governance by communities and individuals are intrinsically intertwined. Therefore, government is not so much about governing others, but about letting others govern themselves ("conduct of conduct"). Through societal discourses about proper and normal behaviour — the do's and don'ts of a society — and through social practices by the family, at school and at work, where improper behaviour is corrected, citizens get socialized and thus start to practice valid norms and values (which is a form of self-governance). Hence, according to this approach, there is no shift from government to governance, because both are part of the same power structure that has existed for years, which emerged with the birth of the modern nation state.

One branch of governmentality studies is particularly relevant for forest governance. It focuses on the creation of environmental subjects (citizens) and forest-related identities by states and NGOs. Agrawal (2005) speaks of "environmentality" and Bose et al. (2012) of "forest governmentality." Whereas in the past traditional forest dwellers were often identified as encroachers and uneducated people by the government, they are, in today's governance mechanisms, suddenly applauded as "noble savages," whose forest knowledge should be cherished. And while the former legitimized the violent exclusion of people from their forest lands, their new identities define them as interesting vehicles for implementing forest policy programmes. Hence, community participation is not so much an increase of decision-making power for ordinary people, but the shaping of environmentally responsible subjects and the creation of mutual consent around forestry problems and objectives as defined by governments and NGOs.

Conclusion

The term "forest governance" has various meanings: from steering in general to new modes of governance that go beyond the confines of the state, which can be multi-level in nature. Examples of new modes of "forest governance" are the decentralization of forest administration, participatory forest management, forest certification and payment for ecosystem services (particularly REDD+). Results of these initiatives have however been reported as "mixed."

Forest governance literature has been criticized for being too managerial and too naïve about the role of power. Governmentality studies question whether the shift from government to governance has taken place, promoting an alternative perspective on the inherent relationship between state and citizenry.

The term "forest governance" is indeed contested. This article has aimed to contribute to bridging the gap between science and the practitioners' debates on forest governance, since integrating the insights of both sides can strengthen efforts for forest conservation and sustainable use on the ground.

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