



EUROPEAN FOREST INSTITUTE

Green Protectionism or a breakthrough for sustainable management?

Different narratives on illegal logging across the globe

Seminar “Forests and development: from development discourses to providing data for decision making”
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Before I begin...

Presentation based on joint publication that is currently under review: **G. Winkel, S. Leipold, K. Buhmann, B. Cashore, W. de Jong, I. Nathan, M. Sotirov, M. Stone**: Narrating illegal logging across the globe. Between green protectionism and sustainable resource use (in review)



Structure of this talk

1. The policy perspective: the problem and its solutions
2. The academic perspective: the importance of narratives
3. Methods
4. Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe
5. Conclusions

1 The policy perspective: the problem and its solutions

Illegal logging

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

Since late 1990s on the global policy agenda

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

The policy perspective: the problem and its solutions (2)

Domestic hard law in “consumer” countries

- 2008 Lacey Act Amendment in the US
 - 2010 (2013) European Union’s Timber Regulation
 - 2012 Illegal Logging Prohibition Act in Australia
- Constitution of a global legality (verification) regime

Example: EU Timber Regulation

- Prohibits placing on the market for the first time of illegally harvested timber and timber products
- Requires operators to exercise due diligence along the supply chain: information, risk assessment & mitigation

The policy perspective: the problem and its solutions (3)

- But how is the problem and its solution perceived across the globe – and is the solution effective?

2 The academic perspective: the importance of narratives

Policy narratives

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

Methodological approach

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

Methods (2)

Table: Data per country/region

Country/Region	Interviews	Documents and other data
Australia	8	38 policy documents
Cambodia	20	28 newspaper articles, 5 NGO reports, 5 policy documents
China	107	
European Union	45	31 policy documents
Indonesia	49	
Peru	Email exchanges with 3 key forestry experts; multiple informal interviews	Several reports, research paper and media
United States	31	19 informal conversations, 103 policy documents

4 Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe

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

Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (2)

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

- Shared pattern: two opposed narratives – relating to proponents and opponents of the respective laws
- “Baptist & Bootlegger” coalitions in all cases

Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (3)

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

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

Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (5)

“Emerging Economies” (China, Indonesia)

Three main narratives

1. **Objection of green Western protectionism**
2. (Big) business pragmatism and chance for investments
3. Regain state control

Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (6)

Table: Illegal logging narratives in the China (*Stone/Cashore*)

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

Results: narratives on illegal logging across the globe (7)

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

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

- The role of local communities
 - The need to strengthen the state
 - Corruption of the state/high state officials
 - Environmental protection
- Focus on domestic & neglect of international issues
- Effects of legality verification are seen as rather limited, but increasing

5 Conclusions

- Illegal logging and legality verification are discussed strikingly different across the globe
- Distinct perceptions of the problem & solutions will also impact (the debate of) effectiveness
- Narratives in “Western consumer” countries focuses strongly on global issues, narratives on “developing” countries mostly on domestic issues
- Baptist and bootleggers occur in all countries

Conclusions (2)



For policy makers

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

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For policy makers

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 FROM SCIENCE TO POLICY 1

Assessment of the EU Timber Regulation and FLEGT Action Plan



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