



Forest land-use governance and change through Forest Owner Associations – Actors' roles and preferences in Bavaria



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ABSTRACT

Various policies affect forest land-use governance today. The mobilization of wood for industrial and energy use is gaining importance in Europe. Local initiatives can lead to change in forest use and management. Actors can establish or join initiatives to achieve or prevent change. This paper identifies the actors, their role, preferences and perceptions, analyzing 21 private forest initiative networks (Forest Owner Associations) in Bavaria, South Germany. It applies the Actor-centred-Analytical Approach and uses social network analysis as well as semi-structured interviews as main methods. It also answers practitioners' questions, if and to what extent these initiatives do/can contribute to wood mobilization. Qualitative insights into the actors' perceptions of potential improvements or success of these initiatives are also given.

1. Introduction

This paper aims to identify the actors and their role in the partial networks of 21 private forest initiatives (Forest Owner Associations, FOAs) in Bavaria, Germany. Such initiatives have been established and developed over the last decade(s) and were meant to be supported by the forest administration, for example, to improve the activation of forest owners.

Today, researchers as well as practitioners are interested to better understand how these initiatives work and what role they could play for mobilizing wood and other forest products and services (see for example Schreiber et al., 2015). Besides providing insights into the influence and role of actors in the various private forest initiatives, this paper aims to identify and learn from differences and similarities in actors' priorities, perceived implementation of these priorities and their potential for further improvement.

The analysis of FOAs in this paper is part of a larger research framework, which aims to analyze actors and change potentials within initiatives, considering both government and private forest initiatives as well as forest owner type analyses. It is supported by and contributes to the EU project 'Sustainable Innovative Mobilization of Wood' (SIMWOOD).

1.1. Definitions

In this paper *actors* refer to organizations or individuals that perform important roles in political processes or networks. They are likely

to attain these roles if they possess strong *individual, independent capacities* (e.g. financial, informational), are *willing* to join and support the goals of such networks, and can gain additional capacities through the network via *'third party' actors* (see below, Aurenhammer, 2013a).

The 'objects' of investigation in this paper are the *decision networks* of and around Bavarian *Forest Owner Associations*. Within decision networks, actors define political problems and program goals and formulate and implement political programs. FOAs are defined as actors that organize individual private forest owners. I do not study the relations of individual, private forest owners (members) within the respective associations. However, in some cases certain individual owners may perform important roles (for FOAs) as representatives of social groups or in other local social contexts. *Political or policy programs* are defined according to Krott (2005: 23) as statements by actors, made in a social context, concerning (if they deal with forests) the use and/or protection of a forest. They can evolve from and concern multiple levels of socio-political decision-making.

1.2. Political programs

In December 2013 there were 136 FOAs in Bavaria (StMELF, 2014). According to political programs (i.e. 'Waldpakt'/'Forest Pact' 2004 and 2013) FOAs will be politically and practically supported by the Bavarian Forest Administration. In both programs the Bavarian Forest Administration has agreed to strengthen and provide incentives for FOAs, which should continue to establish efficient structures (StMELF, 2015).

FOAs are considered by some to play a key role in the successful

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continuation of sustainable forestry in all private forests (BBV, 2004). Therefore, they need professional organizational structures. To reach this goal funding schemes are needed to contribute to an increased efficiency and improved market position of the FOAs to establish economically viable structures into the future (BBV, 2004).

In the joint declaration on the strengthening of forestry and rural areas (Forestry 2020, 'Waldpakt 2013') the support of FOAs is reassured politically (Government of Bavaria, et al., 2013). The Bavarian Government will support FOAs with advisory services provided by local forest administration staff, through funding, cooperation based on trust and intensive information exchange, while abiding by the obligations to reduce staff. This will help to overcome the high effort requirement arising from small-scale ownership structures, combined with a lack of access to forests, to ensure the management of all forests, and especially of those from the smallest forest ownership categories. This will contribute to climate change mitigation and a transition to cleaner energies and to enable the local wood-processing industry to be supplied with the sustainable raw-material wood. (See *ibid.*, 2013).

While analytical research does not favor certain normative interests (e.g. wood mobilization) over others, it can help to provide policy makers and practitioners with insights into the networks in which FOAs are embedded, including the actors, their roles and their preferences. This helps to answer practical questions beyond analytical research results. Such questions include, for example, whether networks or FOAs are likely to facilitate wood mobilization through greater joint production and marketing of wood from small private forest owners.

1.3. General understanding of how FOAs work

In this paper forest land use and land-use change are seen as a social process. At various political levels actors engage in networks that set the frame for or influence forest owners' land-use decisions. Wood production is one important issue in this process. The analyses in this paper focus on the local FOA networks. I examine the actors in these networks, their roles and their preferences in forest management and use. Hence, the focus is on a local and regional level of governance.

Local initiatives can lead to change in forest management or land use. Various actors can formulate goals and define measures (i.e. a program) in participatory processes. To be successful, initiatives and their actors depend on (private) forest owners and their willingness to participate. Critical here is the preferences (goals) of forest owners and their forest land-use decisions.¹

To achieve or prevent certain changes in forest management and use (e.g. motivating forest owners for a sustainable wood mobilization), actors can work together (e.g. by establishing an initiative). The 'potential for change' (Aurenhammer, 2013a) that such an initiative holds, will depend on the individual capacities of the actors involved (e.g. on their financial resources and know-how), on their willingness to support the initiative (i.e. the degree to which an actor's interests coincide with the program goals), and on the possibility to gain (missing or required) capacities through third party actors in the network (e.g. subsidies, advice, training and trust) (Aurenhammer, 2013a, 2015; Prabowo et al., 2015).

If the actors succeed in formulating a program or policy (i.e. achieve 'policy change'), its implementation will depend on the support of forest owners ('changes in practice'). The potential for change on the very local implementation level also depends on forest owners' willingness and capacities and the availability of support from third party actors. Additionally, the social and natural environment of an initiative can also facilitate change (e.g. changes in markets, counter initiatives,² influence through other sectors, abiotic and biotic calamities).

¹ Results from forest owner (type) analyses are beyond the scope of this paper. However, individual forest owners may also be part of FOA networks (actors), i.e. if they gain important roles or a representative function.

² See Aurenhammer, 2015; regarding counter-hegemonial strategies, see for example Brand, 2011, 2012; della Porta and Diani, 2006; Tilly and Wood, 2009.

1.4. Research focus and questions

Developing solutions to the political problems described above requires analytical insights into the decision networks of FOAs. Therefore, I apply the 'Actor-centred Analytical Approach' (AAA) (Aurenhammer, 2013a). The theoretical and methodical basis of this approach is outlined below. I apply partial network analysis, to gain insights into the role of actors in FOA networks and on the goals and successes of FOAs, as perceived by different actor groups.

In doing so, I aim to answer the overall research question 'How do local FOAs formulate programs and set priorities?' as well as more specific ones:

- 1.) Who are the influential actors in Bavarian FOA networks? What role the Bavarian forest administration gains therein? What capacities are considered most relevant in these networks?
- 2.) What preferences for the local use and management of forests do these actors have?
- 3.) How do they perceive the implementation of their preferences?

European states increasingly face challenges in wood mobilization (see Schreiber et al., 2015). 'Sustainable forest management' and the use of wood is defined and influenced by a variety of policies at different and fragmented levels (see Giessen, 2013), for example international, pan-European, European, national and sub-national. Such policies include industrial/energy, forestry/agriculture, climate/environmental, and construction/housing policies. An increased demand for wood can only be addressed through domestic and/or foreign policies and initiatives.

1.5. How this policy analysis helps to answer practical questions

Policy analysis aims to explain concrete political results. It is seen as a problem- and interaction-oriented science, which analyzes concrete political decision-making processes and how they are achieved in practice (Schubert and Bandelow, 2009). Therefore, it is valuable to show how this analytical research may help to solve certain practical questions or problems.

In this paper I focus on domestic initiatives supported by Bavarian forest pact programs. Policy makers and practitioners are interested to find out, if and to what extent various initiatives currently contribute (or could contribute) to solving certain 'problems', as perceived by some actors. Such problems include, for example, sustainable wood mobilization or encouraging forest owners to use and manage their forests 'sustainably' (and how this is/would be supported by forest owners³). Above analyses therefore also provide answers to questions of policy makers and practitioners, such as:

- 1.) Are FOAs currently embedded in networks that facilitate the joint-production and marketing of wood from small private forest owners?
- 2.) Are the goals/preferences of these initiatives favorable for a change towards increased joint-production and marketing of wood?

To answer these questions of research and practice, it is helpful to apply an analytical approach that explains the decision-making processes and describes the goals of actors (and forest owners) regarding forest use and management in general (see Aurenhammer, 2013a; Krott et al., 2014). This contrasts with a normative approach, which would start from a problem and/or only focus on processes related to wood mobilization.

³ As noted above, this is beyond the scope of this paper.

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