



A quantitative review of the representation of forest conflicts across the world: Resource periphery and emerging patterns[☆]

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ABSTRACT

The ubiquitous nature of forest conflicts lends themselves to quantitative analysis on a global level which could help facilitate the further development of conflict management tools. The aim of this work is to present a quantitative review of the representation of forest conflicts across the world, developing an analysis of the geographical components of forest conflicts using the contested resource periphery theory as a framework. The analysis was based on a database covering 303 forest conflicts identified in academic literature and reports from international forest organisations and environmental non-governmental organisations (ENGOS). The analysis includes a methodology to geographically define the economic cores at different scales, and the location of the conflicts regarding a core–periphery continuum. The results found that forest conflicts are located in resource peripheries on global levels, but not necessarily on regional or local levels, as the type of conflict adds additional complexity to the analysis. Finally, it was found that international ENGOS targeting the operations of forest industry focus mainly on resource peripheries, which is a reflection of the resource's location, but also target the markets and financiers, usually found at the economic cores. The work provides additional tools for the analysis of the geography of forest conflicts, and the implications of the work not only feeds into the understanding of how conflicts develop, but also helps in verifying the theory of contested resource periphery.

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1. Introduction

Conflicts involving forests can have significant economic, environmental and social implications, affecting large areas of forests and significant numbers of people. In Asia, for example 75% of forests are affected by conflict (Yasmi et al., 2010). The significance of this is highlighted by the fact that there are nearly 500 million forest-dependent people in the region (World Bank, 2004), as well as that the region is home to large numbers of flora and fauna that are not found elsewhere, for example, 59.6% of the vascular plant species found in Indonesia are unique to the country (WRI, 2003).

One of the main motivations for research into forest conflicts is to improve the selection of the means at hand for their management, minimising their damage (and maximising the positive outcomes). With a few notable exceptions, previous research has placed a great deal of emphasis on the utilisation of case studies (e.g. Hellström, 2001; Gritten and Kant, 2007; Kortelainen, 2010) for analysing the

trends that are the foundations of forest conflicts. These case studies have greatly enhanced our understanding of the subject, and done a great deal in developing the field of conflict management. For example, Hellström's (2001) study of seven conflicts is valuable on many levels of conflict management, particularly in examining it from the perspective of conflict culture. Inevitably, however, there are numerous issues (e.g. comparing conflict hotspots against certain economic, environmental and social indicators) in forest conflicts that merit analysis on a larger regional or global scale, especially in the context of their apparent ubiquitous nature. Previous quantitative work has identified various key trends in forest conflicts at a global or regional scale (e.g. Yasmi et al., 2006; Gerber, 2010; Gritten and Mola-Yudego, 2010, 2011; Mola-Yudego and Gritten, 2010; Mola-Yudego et al., 2012), which play an important part in developing our understanding of various areas of conflicts. An example of which is the role that such analysis plays in testing the theories developed for understanding the conflicts, and, for example, how they escalate (Yasmi et al., 2006) and their impacts and intensity (Gritten et al., 2012).

One such theory that lends itself as a suitable approach for a quantitative analysis of conflicts is contested resource peripheries (e.g. Hayter et al., 2003; Hayter, 2008). Resource periphery has its origins in economic geography (e.g. Krugman, 1991), and has been used to examine

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the workings of the global economy (Hayter et al., 2003; Hayter, 2008). The basic premise of the theory is that areas rich in natural resources, such as forests, are often located far from the market centres, in often remote, sparsely populated and inaccessible areas. The resource peripheries can exist on a regional (e.g. national, continental) and global level. The contested nature is built on the notion of uneven development within a country, and between countries, as Raffer (1987) calls it an exploitative relationship between centre and periphery, and for example, developed and developing countries. The importance of this is that an increasingly interdependent relationship develops based on the exploitation of the resources (Bradshaw, 2001), with significant implications for governance and management of the resources.

Hayter et al. (2003) also use resource periphery to further develop an understanding of the work of environmental non-governmental organisations (NGOs)¹: concluding that they focus on the peripheries. This is somewhat supported by the World Resources Institute WRI (2003) and Wright and Andersson (2012) who argue that non-governmental organisations (NGOs), including NGOs, focus on and play an important role in areas where capacity in natural resource management needs to be developed (i.e. especially at the resource periphery). Again this is something that lends itself to further examination on a quantitative level.

Following these ideas, the aim of this paper is to present a quantitative review of the representation of forest conflicts across the world, providing methodological tools and developing an analysis of the geographical aspects of forest conflicts under the resource periphery framework on a global level, further expanding the notion put forward by Hayter et al. (2003) that resource peripheries are deeply contested spaces. To explore this notion the work will respond to the following hypotheses using a database of 303 forest conflicts:

1. Based on Hayter (2008) that resource peripheries are contested areas, forest conflicts are located in resource peripheries on regional and global levels.
2. There is a correlation between the geographical scale of resource peripheries (regional and global) and the type of the conflicts occurring.
3. Based on Hayter et al. (2003) that NGOs particularly focus on resource peripheries.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Forest conflict

The globally diverse nature of forests, regarding their uses, types, as well as how they are viewed in different cultural settings often results in a broad definition of forest conflicts (Hellström, 2001; Yasmi, 2007). FAO (2000), for example, sees natural resource management conflicts as being based on disagreements and disputes regarding access and management of the resources, while Deutsch (1973) sees conflict as being based on incompatible activities whereby one party is restricting the activities of another. Glasl (1999) defines this as being when one group impairs the activities of another, for example, restricting their access to the resource or excluding them from the decision making process (Yasmi, 2007). In the context of the examination of resource periphery theory, and its applicability on a regional and global level, it is also important to acknowledge the differences between the underlying (i.e. fundamental or broader issues such as forestry policy) and direct (location specific issues) causes of conflict (FAO, 2000).

At their extreme the conflicts can be violent, but mostly they are non-violent though often very damaging on economic (e.g. loss of

income for those involved), environmental (e.g. environmental degradation) and social levels (e.g. disharmony and division within social groups) (White et al., 2009; Yasmi et al., 2010; Gritten et al., 2012). It should, however, be noted that there are also positive dimensions, such as stronger collective action (Castro and Nielson, 2001; Yasmi et al., 2010), though if not addressed the negative aspects will dominate (Yasmi et al., 2009).

2.2. Economic cores and resource peripheries

Cores and peripheries are not defined by national or other territorial boundaries but by their position in the world economy networks. McCann and Gunn (1998) refer to the core as the heartland, while the periphery is the hinterland. Cores mean those areas that concentrate a large share of economic activities, for a given region, or at a global level. These areas are categorised as having high levels of consumption mainly relying on imported resources. The cores can then encompass, for example, the urbanised parts of Western Europe, North America and Japan, as well as the growing urban centres of Asia. On the other hand peripheries are those spaces which are integrated into trade and markets at a regional and global scale through their dependence on primary products and low value added exports (Hayter et al., 2003; Barton et al., 2008). They encompass large areas of developing countries as well as more remote and resource-dependent parts of Europe and North America (e.g. Barnes and Haytner, 2005).

The contested periphery theory provides an approach to analyse the complex relationships between cores and peripheries. Barnes and Haytner (2005) point out that there are four broad institutional forces which define the present global significance and role of natural resources in resource peripheries. *Industrialism* refers to the resource utilisation and organisation of production of private capital, usually large corporations. *Regulationism* means regulatory effects by the government at all levels from the local to the global on the operations of resource production. *Environmentalism* implies the increasing influence of transnational NGOs on the resource production. *Aboriginalism* represents the growing role of indigenous peoples concerning their rights and local resource control.

In the context of contested resource periphery, conflicts are, in most cases, a reflection of external (outsider) organisations that are directly (ownership) or indirectly (shareholders, financiers, customers) based at the economic core, coming to the periphery to take advantage of the available resources and with the result of the impairment of the communities' rights, including access. One key feature of the contested peripheries is tenure, i.e. where property rights are poorly defined thereby providing an environment more susceptible to conflict (Hayter, 2008). According to the contested resource periphery hypothesis (Hayter et al., 2003), the scale and scope of resource conflicts is characterised by a clash of interests over the appropriate use of natural resources. Specifically, different organisations from different industrial, political, environmental and cultural arenas are attempting to protect their interests and often seeking to remap land, resources and associated property rights according to their particular values and needs.

The hypothesis central to contested resource periphery is that institutions play a key role in how the resources are used (Hayter, 2008), based on their interests and values. Effectively the power holders (at the core), who organise the production, finance and related activities, are attempting to ensure their interests and values are at the fore in the management of the resources (at the periphery). A symbol of this is the uneven power relations (Barton et al., 2008). These power holders include commodity companies, financial institutions, governmental organisations, as well as NGOs and their environmental counterparts (NGOs). Hayter et al. (2003) also hypothesise that NGOs particularly focus on resource peripheries, seeing them as being particularly geographically mobile. The focus of NGOs is a response to environmental degradation, on a local level, but with global ramifications (e.g. deforestation in Indonesia and Brazil) (Hayter,

¹ Broadly speaking the ENGO movement is attempting to bring about a more just and equal society as well as re-prioritising its aims and functions, moving it more towards caring for the environment.

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