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Media analysis in a case study of Šumava National Park: A permanent dispute among interest groups[☆]

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ABSTRACT

The proclamation of Šumava National Park as a large-scale protected territory in the early 90's of the 20th century shortly after the change of the political regime in Czechoslovakia resulted in the onset of discussions among different interest groups. The question of the approach to its management has always been controversial because forest ecosystems were essentially modified due to intensive forest management and in particular, the indigenous vegetation with native species composition has been preserved in insignificant residues only. The discussion between supporters of the “non-intervention regime” and supporters of “forestry approaches” is also reflected in reporting of the media, which addresses the public. The authors use media content analysis and framework based on a CIMO logic to find out whether the media and way of reporting can reflect the dynamism of the acting factors, provide feedback to the policy and decision makers and interests groups, and how the media influence the perception of the forestry sector by the public and, in this connection, the communication of foresters with the public and forest policy enforcement.

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1. Introduction

Communication is the necessary basis of all social interaction (Primmer and Kyllönen, 2006). Krott (2000, 2005) illustrates interactions among the components in relation to various forms of communication. As stated by Birot et al. (2002), changing policies and patterns of governance and a growing environmental awareness on a global level will probably require fundamental policy changes in redefining the partnership between society and the forest sector at the regional or national level. Governance is understood, in a broad sense here, as a decision-making process, relating to, inter-alia, planning about forests (Püzl and Rametsteiner, 2002). Even though governing competencies remain entirely at the national realm, national policies are not formulated and implemented in isolation (Hogl, 2002). As Hogl (2000) argues, the implementation of forest policy involves forestry interest groups, leading to mutual dependencies between foresters and stakeholders creating complex relationships. Schanz (2002) notes that forest policy should aim to reach an agreement on those issues that are currently at stake. According to Kleinschmit (2012), the reporting by media mirrors the perceptions of the actors at different political levels and the

perceptions can influence the decision-making by either affecting the policy agenda or providing a platform for deliberation.

Communication is the key instrument for the promotion of forest policy in the forestry sector in relation to other target and interest groups and the public and mass media is a powerful tool used to effect social change (Quigley, 2006). It is the relevant public sources of information and opinions with the power to give specific meanings to issues. Thus, the actors involved perceive mass media as an efficient way to express their perspective regarding forests and their relation to forest issues (Sadath et al., 2013). As is claimed by Fabra-Crespo and Rojas-Briales (2015), communication fluxes from the forest stakeholders to society have not been sufficiently studied in many countries, not excluding the Czech Republic. Sadath et al. (2013) use framing theory as a method of understanding media reporting on different levels. In Feindt and Kleinschmit (2011), three types of frames together with their causes are analysed: diagnostic frames pointing out problems, prognostic frames indicating solutions to problems and, finally yet importantly, motivational frames that indicate the urgency of an issue by, for example, naming a victim. Frames give meaning to complex situations (Kleinschmit and Sjöstedt, 2014). According to Feindt and Kleinschmit (2011), both political actors and mass media use frames strategically to pursue their own goals and interest.

As Macnamara (2005) claims, editorial media content influences readers, viewers and listeners and understanding the content of editorial mass media is important for organisations involved in public communication. In forest policy, content analysis has become an increasingly important tool of decoding media messages relating to pending forestry

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issues such as climate and environmental change, applied by forest policy researchers. To name but a few, in their study, [Fabra-Crespo and Rojas-Briales \(2015\)](#) use summative content analysis to analyse forest-related messages. Qualitative analysis is applied in the study of [Fischer et al. \(2016\)](#). [Kleinschmit \(2012\)](#) is concerned with the discourse in the media perceived as an indicator of public opinion. Discourse and expertise in forest and environmental governance is discussed in [Kleinschmit et al. \(2009\)](#). [Leipold \(2014\)](#) gives a review of forest-related discourse analyses. [Kleinschmit and Sjøstedt \(2014\)](#) apply the framing concept and quantitative analysis to investigate the newspaper coverage of forest-related climate change. [Arvai and Mascarenhas \(2001\)](#) used the media's framing in the analysis of a forestry debate. In order to analyse and categorise the documentation related to European forest policy, a qualitative approach to content analysis was undertaken by [Edwards and Kleinschmit \(2013\)](#).

International media in particular and the relation between media coverage and conflict intensity and their potential impact are evaluated in the paper by [Gritten et al. \(2012\)](#) who conclude that despite the high intensity and potential impact of many of them, with a few exceptions international media had relatively little coverage of the evaluated conflicts.

In the broader Central European region there already exist several studies involving media content analyses. For example in Slovakia the situation is analysed by [Sarvašová and Kolláriková \(2010\)](#), in whose opinion the reports on forestry accounted for 0.44% of all media reporting. In Germany the issue of FSC in media is covered by [Dobler et al. \(2014\)](#). An analysis performed by [Ensinger et al. \(2014\)](#) dealing with cultural relevance of the planned Black Forest National Park with special focus on the perception of forest and time is the closest to our research.

Nevertheless no such research involving content analysis for the study of forest policy and forest-related issues has been carried out in the Czech Republic so far, let alone the content analysis of the media forest-related coverage.

The aim of the article is to provide a media content analysis using the case of Šumava National Park (NP). Based on the media content analysis, the authors endeavour to demonstrate how the activities of main forest policy actors are reflected in the Czech media in reality and what impact the media may have on the perception of the vast public and forest-policy decision makers. The article concentrates on a debate that was both ignited and propagated by the mass media over the bark beetle calamity in the Šumava NP and studies methods of management in the NP territory and the way of reporting and its influx on shaping the opinion of a vast professional and lay public. The image of the Czech Republic' forestry is analysed as well.

The study is divided into several parts. After brief characteristics of CIMO approach in [Section 2](#), a short description of the Šumava NP follows in [Section 3](#) and the main research questions are stated in [Section 4](#). In [Section 5](#) a brief survey of theories as well as practical implications of the content analysis in scientific research are described. After the presentation of results in [Section 6](#), findings are discussed and conclusions are drawn as answers to the stated research questions in [Section 7](#).

2. CIMO approach

In describing a situation/situational analysis, whether in forest policy or business, the SWOT analysis is applied quite frequently, highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats associated with a particular project, type of business or politics. However, it does not address the relationships of the actors and, as [Weihrich \(1982\)](#) argues, it is difficult to translate the results of the SWOT analysis into meaningful actions that could be adopted within a wider strategy.

To capture the context and dynamics of complex processes or cases it can be preferable to use schemes that take into account a broader spectrum of problems. A suitable tool consists in applying CIMO logic.

The CIMO model was presented by [Denyer et al. \(2008\)](#) and [Denyer and Tranfield \(2009\)](#), following [Pawson \(2006\)](#). [Rajwani and Liedong \(2015\)](#) used the CIMO logic for the analysis of corporate political activity. CIMO logic consists of four parts, where the following questions are analysed:

C - Context. Which individuals, relationships, institutional settings, natural conditions or wider systems are being studied?

I - Intervention. The effects of what event, action, and impact of natural factors or activity are being studied?

M - Mechanisms. What are the mechanisms that explain the relationship between interventions and outcomes? Under what circumstances are these mechanisms activated or not activated?

O - Outcomes. What are the effects of the intervention? How will the outcomes be measured? What are the intended and unintended effects?

[Holloway et al. \(2016\)](#) explored CIMO approach in accordance with several ways to implement the notion of design science. The CIMO framework was utilised for planning research by [Straatemeier et al. \(2010\)](#) and within transport planning by [Soria-Lara et al. \(2016\)](#).

In a design science approach to management, [Denyer et al. \(2008\)](#) discuss the application of the CIMO logic, which extends the previous applications of the design proposition notion. This logic involves a combination of a problematic Context, for which the design proposition suggests a certain Intervention type, to produce, through specified generative Mechanisms, the intended Outcome(s) ([Denyer et al., 2008](#)).

From the view point of the causality of the CIMO logic, media and media attraction can be regarded as the Output, while at the same time individual stages (C, I, M, O) abound in their own dynamics and continuity in time and thus are being continually depicted by the media. Following [Denyer et al. \(2008\)](#), the authors apply the CIMO logic to the analysis and description of the development dynamics in the Šumava NP case study.

3. Šumava NP – Characteristics

Šumava NP is a large forested territory extended on an area of 68,064 ha in the southwest of the Czech Republic, where a special regime for environmental protection with special treatment measures was set up. The large-scale protection of the Šumava Mountains began as early as in 1963 by proclaiming the territory a Protected Landscape Area (PLA) covering an area of 168,654 ha, which was followed by declaring a large part of the PLA a National Park in 1991, resulting in an area of 99,624 ha excluded from the National Park. Under the provisions of § 78 article 1 of Act No. 144/1992 Coll. on Nature Conservation and Landscape Protection as amended; the Administration of the National Park also acts as the administrating body for the Protected Landscape Area of Šumava ([Šumava, 2016](#)). Failure is believed to be an important experience from which learning can take place ([Shepherd et al., 2011](#)). The case of the Šumava NP has always been one of the most problematic issues in forestry of the Czech Republic. This case study draws on typical problems and conflicts, which were sharpened among the main stakeholders during and following the bark beetle calamity and the issues and problems resulting from it. The main controversies in the forest management are whether the trees affected by the European Spruce Bark Beetle (*Ips typographus*) in some parts of the Šumava NP should be felled and treated. These conflicts, commented on by experts and publicists, persist to this day, even in the parliament. A separate Act on the NP has already been prepared several times but has never been passed. The media in this case has played a significant role. Otherwise, the NP follows the regulations contained in the Act on nature and landscape conservation.

A number of Czech politicians and scientists took advantage of the dispute about the NP for their visibility. The conflicts that followed have polarised foresters and NGOs, municipalities and park management, state institutions: The Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment, political parties, the central government and regional authorities, experts, and even academic conflicts between

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