



The regime complex for tropical rainforest transformation: Analysing the relevance of multiple global and regional land use regimes in Indonesia



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ABSTRACT

Increasingly, international agreements, treaties, and conventions address tropical deforestation and specific causes of rainforest transformation. Such international regimes may aim to conserve natural forests or to support the exploitation of lands for a particular purpose, e.g. agricultural commodities. This paper's goal is to map the international regime complex for rainforest transformation by identifying those global and regional regimes that are relevant for tropical rainforest transformation systems in Indonesia. The relevance of international regimes for rainforest transformation is assessed based on a novel methodology using two criteria: First, international regimes may be relevant in Indonesia because the core problem they address exists in Indonesia (problem dimension). Second, specific international regimes may be made relevant by the actions of specific actors and their coalitions in pursuit of their interests (actor dimension). To achieve the study's goals we used (1) content analysis of international policy documents and treaty texts, (2) expert interviews with key informants in Indonesia, and (3) own field observations in current Indonesian land use politics. The results indicate that regimes dealing with biological diversity, climate change, trade in endangered species, wetland management, international tropical trade, illegal logging, Southeast Asian (ASEAN) forest and environment, the Asia Pacific free trade, and the southeast Asian rubber trade regime are relevant in both the problem and actor dimensions. The regimes concerned with desertification and international forestry research are relevant only in the actor dimension. In contrast, the following regimes are relevant only in the problem dimension: indigenous rights, forest certification, palm oil certification, agroforestry certification, and international rubber trade. We discuss our results considering global and regional regimes relevant to Indonesian rainforest transformation systems. We conclude that regimes relevant solely due to the engagement of domestic actors and not in respect of the problem dimension are unlikely to maintain their relevance in the long term. In the short term, however, they have the potential for creating substantial political benefits for the actors using them. In contrast, regimes with high problem relevance but low actor backing are unlikely to even enter the political agenda, and therefore will have only limited impact. This suggests that future research should consider that, whilst relevance in the problem dimension is necessary to establish regime influence, it alone does not suffice. We can expect global and regional regimes to have an influence only when powerful actors back them in their agenda setting, domestic policy formulation and actual implementation.

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1. Introduction

Indonesian tropical forest transformation was driven largely by the log export boom in the early 1960s and 1970s (Dauvergne, 1998), the rubber boom in the 19th and 20th centuries (Feintrenie and Levang, 2009) and the recent palm oil boom that began in the 20th century and continues today (McCarthy and Zen, 2010). These had negative impacts on forests and involved greenhouse gas

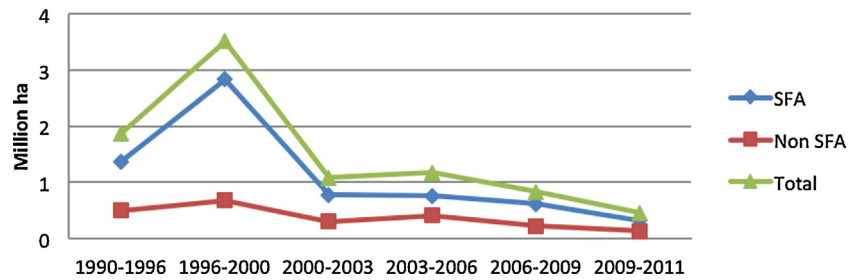


Fig. 1. Deforestation rate in Indonesia from state forest areas (SFA), non-SFAs and total (MoFor, 2012).

emissions and the fragmentation and pollution of habitats (Fitzherbert et al., 2008). In parallel to these recent developments in Indonesia, and over the past two decades, multiple international global and regional forest-related policy initiatives also referred to as “international regimes”, have addressed tropical deforestation and its causes. These regimes have had the purpose of influencing domestic policies (Bernstein and Cashore, 2012; Giessen, 2013a,b). In cases where multiple, competing international regimes exist and are loosely coordinated, Keohane and Victor (2011) speak of an international regime complex.

International regimes have been investigated exhaustively for about two decades (Sprinz, 2005) and multiple forest-related regimes have been analysed extensively already (Humphreys, 2006; McDermott, 2012; Smouts, 2008; Rayner et al., 2010; Edwards and Giessen, 2014). However, the domestic relevance of these regimes, as well as their implementation in specific national settings, has been neglected in research, with a few exceptions (e.g. McDermott et al., 2010). This research has been fragmented into various topics, such as regime effectiveness (Young, 2001; Hovi et al., 2003) or regime effects (Lindstad and Solberg, 2010; Lindstad, 2014). A point of criticism by Lindstad and Solberg (2010) is that the concepts of regime effects and effectiveness are very difficult to apply for methodological reasons. Bernstein and Cashore (2012) take up this critique and simplify this by shifting their focus away from the “effectiveness” of regimes and towards their “influence”. All these approaches implicitly suggest that international regimes are actually relevant to their member states. This ignores the options of treating such regimes as symbolic policy only. Hence, what these novel approaches underestimate, however, is that in any given domestic context a regime may or may not be relevant in two ways: firstly, the problem addressed by a particular regime

may be pertinent specifically to a given country, leading to the relevance of that regime in a **problem dimension** (Krasner, 1982, 1983). Secondly, regimes may be made relevant in a given domestic context due to their active use by domestic policy actors in order to justify their preferences, even if the problem the regime is addressing does not pertain to the country in question. The latter situation is rooted in interest-based bureaucratic politics theory (Krott, 2005; Peters, 2010), according to which national level bureaucracies may utilise international negotiations, regimes and actors to further their interests domestically (Giessen et al., 2014; Giessen, 2013a, 2012; Hofmann, 2002; Hogl et al., 2009). Here, this is considered to be the **actor dimension** of regime relevance.

There are only a few studies that analyse domestic regime relevance. However, Bernstein and Cashore (2012) show that the regimes’ forms are determined by the problem structures and actors, which are very diverse in every country. To explain this we combine two separate theories, regime theory itself and bureaucratic politics theory. Sahide and Giessen (2014) have analysed the legal basis and the problem context of Indonesian tropical rainforest transformation. In addition, Wibowo and Giessen (2012) show the international forest issues relevant in an Indonesian context, a topic also seen in similar sources (Burns and Giessen, 2014; Rahman and Giessen, 2014). Based on bureaucratic politics theory, we take an actor dimension as one core measurement for a regime’s domestic relevance. Then we follow the logic of regime theory, that regimes should correspond with the issues around which they were created, and we conceptualize it as the problem dimension as the second core measurement for relevance. Specifically, Abbott (2011) uses an actor dimension for assessing the orchestration of the climate change regime complex.

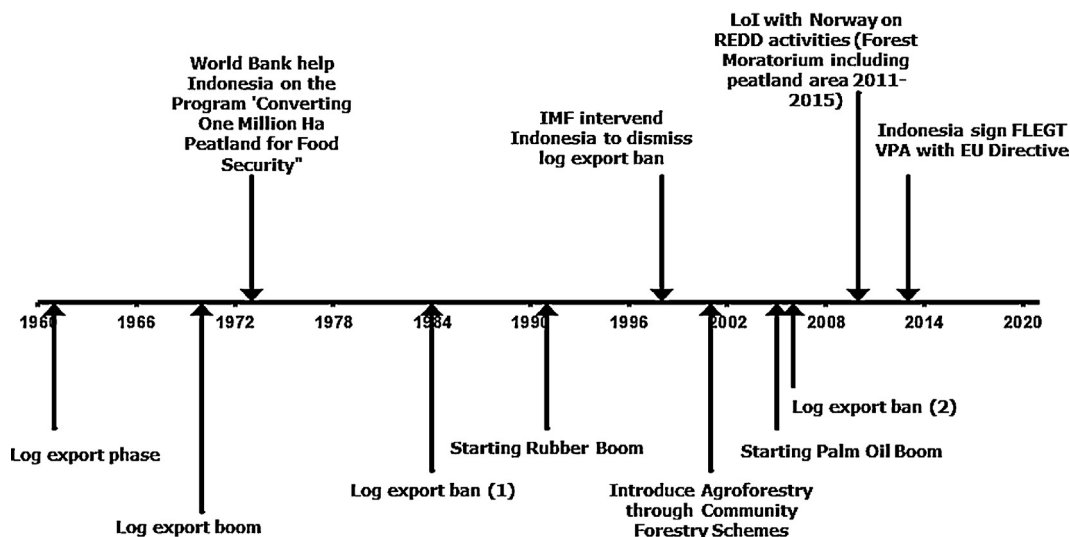


Fig. 2. Timeline of tropical forest transformation in Indonesia (figure based on Dauvergne, 1998; Feintrenie et al., 2010; McCarthy and Zen, 2010; MoA, 2012).

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