



## Is Indonesia utilising its international partners? The driving forces behind Forest Management Units



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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 20 October 2015

Received in revised form 27 March 2016

Accepted 5 April 2016

Available online 22 April 2016

#### Keywords:

Regimes

Interests

International influences

Forest Management Units

Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

International forest regimes have been influencing the development of Indonesia's forest policy, and have complemented its domestic policy initiatives. Indonesian political entities utilise the regimes to pursue bureaucratic benefits and national interests. Forest Management Units (FMUs) comprise our heuristic model. We identified international and domestic actors and institutions that underlie the concept of FMUs and how FMUs are implemented along with the actors' interests. We built our framework and propositions based on bureaucratic politics theory and the theorem on pathways of influence. We used observations, content analysis, and expert interviews to distinguish among actors and institutions, as well as various actors' interests in FMU development. We found that the German government, via the German company *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ)*, is the most powerful actor behind FMUs. International actors have dual motivations for supporting FMUs: (i) formally, they want to find the clearest, most efficient way to invest their motivational cooperation funds in tropical countries and to counter global deforestation; and (ii) informally, they want to counter the influence of Indonesian palm oil plantations. In addition, international interests could be contrary to domestic interests in terms of utilising FMUs. There is a strong, converging concern shared by international and domestic actors, whereby domestic actors use the formal goals of international regimes to pursue domestic interests. Domestic bureaucracies use FMU programmes to relocate power back to the central bureaucracies by preparing instruments that are formally in line with international regimes, but informal in that these instruments are dominated by domestic bureaucracies. For example, the instruments include reinforcing state forest areas, promoting forest benefits, centralising the budget, capacity building, and centralising information.

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### 1. Introduction

Forest Management Units (FMUs) – or *Kesatuan Pengelolaan Hutan* (KPHs) in the Bahasa Indonesia language – have been a core of Indonesia's domestic forest policy. FMUs have been particularly designated as the main tools meant for reforming the domestic forestry sector. Indonesian forest law mandates that FMUs be implemented as a prerequisite for sustainable forest management (SFM). FMUs have received broad support from international donors since the 1990s (e.g. when international donors experimented with FMU production in the province of South Kalimantan). Implementing FMUs requires high political success on the part of politicians, the capacity and availability of institutions to overcome the problem of the hollow

state,<sup>1</sup> and a transparent government (Ostrom, 1999; Agrawal, 2007). In regard to managing forests and finding innovative approaches, a transparent government is especially important for carrying out projects of different global regimes at the domestic level. For example, both domestic and international actors have dealt with global regimes in relation to the Indonesian timber certification system, or the *Sistem Verifikasi Legalitas Kayu* (Nurrochmat et al., 2016; Maryudi, 2015).

With a few exceptions such as McDermott et al. (2010), recent research has not widely examined the interactions between international forest regimes and domestic politics. Sahide et al. (2015) concluded that international regimes would only be relevant for Indonesia at a high level if domestic actors were politically engaged, even if the regimes did not align very well with domestic needs and problems.

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<sup>1</sup> The hollow state indicates a situation whereby a government fails to control forest management due to an unclear sense of tenure (relating to non-state/community actors' claims to the land) and no clear ownership by various government entities over green zones (Ostrom, 1999; Agrawal, 2007).

Domestic politicians often utilise international regimes to pursue domestic and bureaucratic interests. For example, the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) declared that all international donors entering Indonesia should invest their money directly in FMU development, or indirectly guide their programme to the site of an FMU. Such a statement can be explained by looking at bureaucratic politics, which show that FMUs not only offer technocratic tools, but also contain many political instruments for actors to pursue domestic interests. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MoFor) has designated 529 FMU units, or 50% of its target (until 2014); as of February 2015, 120 of them have been designated as FMU models; it is expected that this number will grow in the future (MoFor, 2015a).

This paper shows how international influences have become salient at the domestic level (Bernstein and Cashore, 2012) in Indonesia (Sahide et al., 2015). In addition, this paper examines the framework of the various pathways that international regimes infiltrate national context and influence domestic policy making setting (Bernstein and Cashore, 2012). This paper supports Cortell and Davis (2000) finding that international regimes became an explanatory variable for domestic politics. Using bureaucratic politics theory, this paper identifies domestic and global actors, in addition to their interests, and views these elements (actors and interests) as the driving forces underlying the concept of FMUs. Furthermore, this paper considers how FMUs are implemented in Indonesia.

## 2. Theoretical underpinnings

### 2.1. The theorem on pathways of influence

Regimes can be defined as sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations converge in a given area of international relations (Krasner, 1982). Such sets of principles, norms, and rules on a specific issue, such as SFM, are often codified in documents such as international treaties, conventions, or agreements, thus making them accessible for the purpose of analysis (Humphreys, 1999; Sahide and Giessen, 2015; Edwards and Giessen, 2014). International regimes enter the domestic arena through four pathways: (1) norms, (2) direct access, (3) rules, and (4) the market (Bernstein and Cashore, 2012). The traditional goal of international regimes is to influence domestic policies (Bernstein and Cashore, 2012; Sahide et al., 2015; Giessen et al., 2014; Wiersum and Elands, 2013). Bernstein and Cashore (2012) show that actors and the structures of problems (relating to society, politics, and forest issues) determine the forms that regimes take; they also describe how international regimes placed in a national context are different in each country. Global regimes depend on the structures of the aforementioned problems, actors, and the institutional setting.

Employing Bernstein and Cashore's concept (2012), international regimes could potentially use the aforementioned four channels to infiltrate FMU political development (Fig. 1). In terms of the route for international norms, in order to highlight the issue of regimes at the domestic level, Cortell and Davis (2000) developed four mechanisms whereby domestic actors: (1) materialise their interests, (2) form domestic political institutions, (3) utilise social movements, and (4) build national campaigns that include political rhetoric.

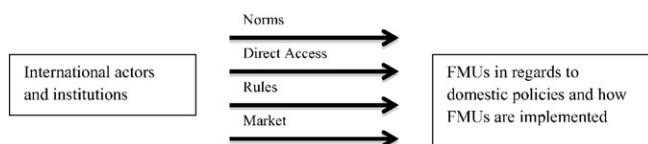


Fig. 1. International regimes influence the notion of FMUs and how they are implemented. Adapted from the four pathways framework developed by Bernstein and Cashore, 2012.

### 2.2. Actor-centred analysis: the politics of bureaucratic power

When we describe actors as a driving force, we are referring to the actor-centred analysis of international and domestic actors as they influence FMU development in Indonesia. Bureaucracies have two central goals: (1) to provide public services using a problem-oriented approach, as stated in their mandates, and (2) to pursue the organisational interests of survival and expansion (Giessen et al., 2014; Giessen, 2011; Krott, 1990, 2005; Schusser et al., 2015). From the perspective of bureaucratic politics theory (Niskanen, 1971; Krott, 1990; Peters, 2010), it is logical for bureaucracies to impose their political agendas in opposition to other bureaucracies, especially with respect to who benefits the most from the formal structure and informal interests of FMUs.

To measure political influence at the international and domestic levels, we developed a framework in which political influence is a function of information and power (based on Simon, 1981; Krott, 1990, 2005; Aurenhammer, 2016; Prabowo et al., 2016). Political influence is the ability to form or implement an international regime's forest issue elements (e.g. international norms of SFM for domestic FMU programmes) according to an individual's or organisation's interests.

#### 2.2.1. Bureaucratic politics explains the institutionalisation of forest management as an instrument of state power

The post-colonial era led to Indonesia becoming a hollow state when the central government failed to properly handle forest management due to its unclear tenure (Ostrom, 2005; Agrawal, 2007). Therefore, the institutionalisation politics of forest management have been used as a technique of state power (Agrawal, 2001 also gives an example from India), not only to overcome this obstacle, but also to meet specific domestic interests. Institutionalising forest management is part of the territorial control process (Peluso and Vandergeest, 2001) by which governments demarcate specific functions of forested land (e.g. conservation or production); in addition, governments mark areas of forested land as being claimed by the state, or potentially offered to private and indigenous actors, but still under state control. Non-state indigenous actors might be against institutionalising forest management if they wish to promote an indigenous concept that is purely established and free of any state structure (Bakker and Moniaga, 2010). This is in line with the theory of economics and forest tenure proposed by Peluso and Vandergeest (2001); they received provisional access to state forests and their resources through government-issued permits that categorised their research under the themes of a state-managed system, privately managed concessions, and community forest use.

Using bureaucratic politics, we should understand the term *societal clientele* (Downs, 1967; Peters, 2010), as a bureaucratic opportunity for actors in the forestry and land use sectors to maintain some balance among state rule, policy domain, and coercive pressure from non-state actors in relation to FMU related issues, such as customary forest rights. Indigenous actors and NGOs, who are always strongly allied with international conservation regimes (Anaya, 2004), could reject the state's FMU proposal to accommodate state scheme on community forestry (CF). However, most international forest regimes will also use the institutionalisation of domestic forests to infiltrate domestic policy by gaining direct access (Bernstein and Cashore, 2012). The global regimes will pursue their formalistic goals and informal interests; vice versa, domestic actors will utilise this instrument as a multi-functional tool for preparing direct access to inviting regimes (similar to McDermott et al., 2010).

#### 2.3. Analytical framework: reconfiguring influence according to the actor's interests and power

Valuable, very useful technocratic instruments that institutionalise forest management can potentially be a strong mechanism of bureaucratic power (see Section 2.2) to drive international actors toward

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