



Forest Policy Analysis: Advancing the *analytical* approach[☆]



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1. Introduction

On the occasion of his 60th birthday, this special issue recognizes the significant contributions and advances made to the field of forest policy analysis by Professor Max Krott. Max Krott has been a leading scholar in the field of forest policy analysis for more than 35 years. Over that time he has developed a remarkable *analytical* approach to forest policy analysis. This special issue contains a selection of papers from his former PhD students, illustrating how the analytical approach developed by Max Krott is influencing forest policy research around the globe.

Max Krott has a background in forest sciences and engineering as well as in political sciences. He was trained at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU) and the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), both in Vienna, Austria. This bi-disciplinary background provided a basis with which he was able to move beyond early approaches to forest policy research, which were largely descriptive, displayed little scientific or methodological rigor, and were driven by normative demands of the forestry sector, with the rationale of supporting only specific policy interests. At that time (in the 1980s), political science research on public policy became increasingly influenced by strong, theory-driven, rigorous and *analytical*, rather than normative approaches. Influenced by this political science “trend”, the use of theory and social-empirical methodologies in forest policy studies has since that time been strongly supported by key scholars. Due to their dedication and remarkable analytical skills, Prof. Peter Glück together with his follower Max Krott paved the way for political science-informed forest policy research. This continued and committed support of the founders of the empirical-analytical approach to forest policy research within a *Glück-Krott school of thought* enabled forest policy analysis to become a “mature” and specialized sub-discipline of policy sciences (Arts, 2012).

In 1982, Max Krott completed his PhD with the title “The regional economic meaning of the wood sector in Austria: place effectiveness – identification factors – possible application” (Krott, 1982; title translated by the authors), supervised by Prof Glück at the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences in Vienna, Austria. After finalizing his Habilitation on “The political action of the forest administration in Austria: theoretical basis and case studies” (Krott, 1988; title trans-

lated by the authors) in 1988, he became Associate Professor in Forest Policy and Regional Planning. In 1995, he moved to the Georg-August-University Göttingen in Germany as Professor and Head of the Chair of Forest and Nature Conservation Policy. Here he reformed the Institute for Forest and Nature Conservation Policy¹ towards political science-based, analytical forest policy research. All three guest editors have spent many enjoyable and productive years at this institute, during which they benefited from and further co-developed Max Krott’s distinct analytical approach.

During his career, Max Krott has supervised over 20 PhD theses. He has also supported many post-doctoral researchers, contributing substantially to their academic careers. Max Krott has published more than 150 scientific papers and written or edited some 12 books. His seminal textbook on forest policy analysis available in German (Krott, 2001a) and English languages (Krott, 2005a) can be regarded as a milestone and solid state-of-the-art basis for teaching forest policy at universities all over the world. As founding Editor-in-Chief of the scientific journal Forest Policy and Economics in 2000, he ultimately advanced academic forest policy science to an internationally acknowledged research area, reflecting the highest standards in research and publishing.

Max Krott has established and contributed to many international networks of forest scientists. He has been active in the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), networking with forest researchers across the globe as well as coordinating task forces and working groups on diverse issues. One of these networks established early by Max Krott in the 1990s was devoted to questions about the particularities of forest policy in Eastern European countries resulting from the new era after the end of the Cold War. Despite his focus on theory-driven scientific research, Max Krott always understood the importance of maintaining attention to practice-related problems, the forest sector and its stakeholders. He has been a highly acknowledged policy advisor to political decision makers from the forest and the environmental sectors as well as from research management and the science and higher education sector. The role of science in the policy process has thereby been central in his research. Although such research has been problem-oriented, Max Krott has embedded it in the theoretically informed analytical approach.

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¹ Today the group is referred to as Chair Group for Forest and Nature Conservation Policy.

2. Advancing the empirical-analytical approach to forest policy analysis

The analytical approach advanced by Max Krott — also referred to as the empirical-analytical approach to forest policy research — can be regarded as his scientific backbone, which he has applied in different sub-areas in recent decades. We will not present his approach at length in this introductory paper because he describes his understanding of it — including its advantages and risks — elsewhere (Krott, 2012; Krott and Giessen, 2014) and presents it in detail in his textbook “Forest Policy Analysis” (Krott, 2005a). However, major factors highlighted by Max Krott should be named to provide the linkage with the contributions to this special issue.

The analytical approach as used by Max Krott is anchored in positivism, a philosophical position emphasizing empirical data and scientific methods. His meta-theoretical anchor is Sir Karl R. Popper's critical rationalism following the rational idea of trial and error and falsification (Popper, 2005). A basic assumption of positivism is that the society and distinct groups within it operate according to general patterns, similar and in analogy to (other) natural phenomena following natural laws. Such regularities are based on factors (variables), which are in a causal relation to each other. Analytical science would detect such dependent and independent variables through (i) hypotheses on their assumed causal relations and (ii) their empirical proof or falsification, followed by (iii) a refinement of the hypotheses and further development of the theories from which they were derived. Consequently, these regularities are empirically detectable by researchers, generating knowledge through the application of rigorous empirical methods. In Max Krott's understanding, these are not limited to quantitative methods. Instead, he supports the analytical use of qualitative methods as well. Max Krott always stressed the assumption that there must be a formula that describes societies, e.g. based on what he refers to as “the power mechanics”. Yet, he admits that social sciences have not yet found this magical formula. In analogy with the Alchemists developing chemical theory and methods in former centuries, the assumption is that social sciences will “just” need some more centuries to refine their theories, hypotheses and methods to a rigorous level comparable with today's standards in e.g. Chemistry. Though not explicitly addressing rational choice, Max Krott's analytical approach can be understood as partnering with this theory as he generally ascribes actors with rational behavior based on their specific interests. He defines interests as “action orientation, adhered to by individuals or groups, and they designate the benefits the individual or group can receive from a certain object, such as a forest.” (Krott, 2005a, b). This rational behavior of actors is however constrained by their imperfect knowledge about what decision and behavior would lead to the achievement of their aims and about the most efficient options for pursuing their interests. Here, Max Krott deviates from rational choice approaches that rely on “complete information” by actors, assuming that different actors operate according to different rationalities, determined by their interests that are embedded in their empirical environment. His work is more inspired by the tradition of “bounded rationality”, as suggested by Simon (1991) and the rational choice understanding based on seminal works by Weber (1978), where different kinds of behavior are regarded as rational however much they may appear to observers to be irrational.

One of Max Krott's major contributions to the study of public policy is his differentiation between formal and informal aspects of policies and interests (Krott, 1990), which is not to be confused with legal or illegal behavior. According to this analytical distinction, policies as well as political actors have formal as well as informal goals. The former are stated publically by actors e.g. in policy documents, while the latter are not. However, informal goals of policies and actors are an integral and decisive part of an actor's interests or of a policy. They are consciously hidden by actors and empirically difficult to observe. Yet, within the analytical approach developed by Max Krott, such informal aspects have enormous explanatory power, often superseding that of

formal goals and interests. Tracing the underlying informal policy goals and interests is therefore a particular challenge of the analytical approach.

Strongly linked with the actor- and interest-centred research conducted by Max Krott is the focus on conflicts. In a world full of actors who are defined by their distinct, at best partly overlapping interests, conflicts among interests are indispensable and they are an integral part of what he conceives as “the political”. It should be mentioned that, in this conception, conflict is not to be understood as something bad, but rather as an important way to further develop societies. This focus on conflicts has also been adopted by many of his students and is well represented in this special issue.

One particular field of core interest is the study of conflict, including the resulting politics and policy, among public bureaucracies and administrations (e.g. Hubo and Krott 2013) – an actor type and explanatory variable which, following the reasoning of Peters (1995) and Downs (1971), Max Krott assigns major explanatory power to. Power is another key concept with high relevance in the different epistemological research traditions of political science that has been taken up in the analytical approach further developed by Max Krott. He emphasizes that decisions in society are the result of multiple power relations between multiple actors and that actors try to realise their interests (Krott, 2012). Together with different scholars, Max Krott worked towards a concept allowing the analysis of power in actor networks in an empirically measurable way, applying both qualitative and quantitative methods (Hasanagas, 2004; Krott and Hasanagas, 2006; Krott et al., 2014). A major result of this endeavour is the actor-centred power model: “The model considers a social relationship between actor A and actor B. In most cases both actors try to alter each other's behaviour, and one actor resists the other's efforts to a degree.” (Krott et al., 2014, p. 37). It terms the actor who alters the behavior of another actor “potentate” and the other actor “subordinate” (Krott et al., 2014, p. 37). “Every actor plays, in different social relations, sometimes the role of potentate and sometimes the role of subordinate, depending on the specific issue” (Krott et al., 2014, p. 37). This conception of power has been further refined by Krott's peers (e.g. Prabowo et al., 2016; Maryudi et al., 2016; Wibowo and Giessen, 2015; Giessen et al., 2016a, b) and applied to a number of empirical fields: In a recent work, for example, Böcher and Krott have applied this power model arguing that scientific knowledge transfer is the result of more powerful actors who have the capabilities to force less powerful actors to use science-based policy solutions (Böcher & Krott, 2016; in press). Similarly, the power concept has been applied to cases of community forestry (e.g. Maryudi et al., 2012; Yufanyi and Krott, 2011; Schusser et al, in this issue), to international forest development policy (Wibowo and Giessen, 2015; Giessen et al., 2016a), to domestic social movements (Maryudi et al., 2016), to forest owners' associations (Šálka et al., in this issue), and to information network analysis (Hasanagas, in this issue).

3. “Leaving marks” in various empirical fields

Max Krott has applied his analytical approach to diverse research fields such as national and international forest policy, nature conservation policy, planning policy and research policy. In the area of forest research he has not only paved the ground for rigorous, analytical, and theory-driven policy research but has also engaged in different sub-areas. Not all of these can be mentioned here but some should be highlighted to give an idea about the diversity of interests and research fields he has addressed.

3.1. International forest (development) policy

One of his research areas in more recent times is international forest policy, often with a particular emphasis on development issues. In this context he has focused on the politics of community forestry, challenging widespread initial findings about — coupled with normative

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