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Fragmented national public media debate on international forest issues: A case study of Germany

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1 **Fragmented national public media debate on interna-**
2 **tional forest issues: A case study of Germany**

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Abstract

Over the past two decades, a number of international forest-related policies have evolved at the global and regional levels. The elements of this International Forest Regime Complex, however, are not equally relevant to all countries. This research analyzes the main actors' positions in the public media debate in Germany and identifies links to the interests of the actors.

First, the study explores the international regime related forest issues. A qualitative content analysis of the public media debate in one high quality newspaper and in internet sources of relevant state- and private actors, analyzes the arguments of these actors in the issues. The results show, that the debate of international forestry issues is fragmented and conflicting in Germany and that the conflict between use and protection structures in the public media debate is not supported by the data. Drivers of conflicting arguments are mainly associations representing protection- as well as user interests. The ministries avoid confrontation in public. Alliances between public agencies and lobby groups are seldom. Due to the strategic use of the public media, the debate does not indicate very well the existing conflicts about the main issues of the international forest regime in Germany.

Keywords: international regime complex, international forest policy issues, forest issue elements, actors, conflicts

35 **1. Introduction**

36 Over the past two decades, a number of policies regarding international forestry have been
37 enacted at the global and regional levels (McDermott et al. 2010; Humphreys 2006). The
38 body of these policies, referred to as the International Forest Regime Complex (IFR-C)
39 (Rayner et al. 2010; Giessen 2012, 2013), has attracted considerable global scientific atten-
40 tion (Rayner et al. 2010). According to Krasner (1982), a regime is defined as a set of implicit
41 or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’
42 expectations converge for a given area of international relations. Accordingly, norms are
43 standards of behavior defined in terms of rights and obligations. Rules are specific prescrip-
44 tions for or proscriptions of actions, and decision-making procedures are prevailing practices
45 for making and implementing collective choice. An international forest regime specifically
46 consists of forest issue elements (FIEs) that aim for both forest conservation and utilization
47 (Humphreys 2006; Giessen 2013).
48 Debated, formulated, and approved at the international level, the elements of this regime
49 complex, however, are not universally applicable to every country (McDermott et al. 2010;
50 McDermott 2014; Schneider 2012; Humphreys 2006). Not all issues addressed by the regime
51 complex, for example, are automatically relevant to each country (McDermott et al. 2010;
52 Burns and Giessen 2014; Rahman and Giessen 2014; Wibowo and Giessen 2012). Domestic
53 agenda-setting processes depend largely on the interests and power level of domestic forest
54 policy actors. These actors may regard the regime complex as an assortment of potentially
55 useful institutional elements for addressing specific international forest-related problems.
56 From this assortment, domestic policy actors may tend to select favored items for domestic
57 policy agendas, while deliberately ignoring others. Due to the conflicting interests of differ-

ent domestic actors, a variety of international forest policy issues may receive attention (Krott 2005). This process is accompanied by a public media debate in which specific actors contribute to public media on a specific issue, often based on their interests, e.g., by making public statements (Giessen et al. 2009; Leipold 2014). In sum, the regime complex provides a formal assortment of international forest policy elements from which selected issues are addressed by actors within individual countries using public media to pursue their interests (Giessen et al. 2009; Humphreys 2009; Winkel 2012).

From this context, the present research aimed to (i) identify Germany's national forest policy issues corresponding to those within the IFR-C, (ii) analyze the public media debate of these issues in Germany, and (iii) identify the strategy of the interest driven actors in the public media debate with regard to these issues. The results offer insights on the support that specific forest policy actors in Germany provide to elements of the IFR-C.

2. Analytical model, research questions, and hypothesis

In specifying our research questions and formulating hypotheses, we rely on the theoretical concepts of national and IFR-C policies, of the relevant public media debate in Germany, and of the driving actors. Policies can be effectively analyzed on the basis of the analytical program (Krott 2005; Sadath and Krott 2012), which stresses the importance of issues, goals, and the implementation stage in describing a specific policy. The analytical program is a rational model to describe the content of a specific policy. Empirical evidence for the program can be found in public statements about the specific policy. Main empirical sources for the analytical program are the relevant laws, the public budgets and binding public documents in regard to specific policies. The analytical program describes activities, which the policy is

80 aiming to do in a specific issue. Within the policy cycle the analytical program is the final
81 product of the policy formulation. It prescribes the preferred content of implementation.

82 “Implementation” is the practical application of formulated programs to the issues, thus
83 contributing towards a solution (Krott 2005). In our paper we focus on the analytical pro-
84 gram which means the issues, the goals and the prescribed implementation. The practice of
85 the implementation process itself is not part of our analysis.

86 The IFR gains influence on national levels by setting forest policy issues on national policy
87 agendas by means of e. g political agreements (Pregernig and Böcher 2012; Weiland 2012).

88 The importance of an issue is formulated by the programs addressing the problems and
89 means to solve them. Within the full public media debate on forest policy, we focused on
90 print and internet media (Arts et al. 2009; Kleinschmit et al. 2009). By examining both broad
91 public media and niche media for professionals in the forestry and environmental sectors,
92 our analysis offers useful insights into the public media positions of different actors on inter-
93 national forestry issues. The national public media debate is created by the communication
94 on forest issues by different policy actors. It can offer on the one hand a public platform for
95 individuals or groups of actors who go public with their specific positions to the particular
96 issues. The actors are not primarily aiming at a rational deliberate debate but are informally
97 driven by their interests to promote their preferred position (Real 2008). On the other hand
98 these public media could act as an individual actor in setting the agendas and defining the
99 importance of certain issues, which is steered by the institutional and ideological anchoring
100 of the media (Mi Sun Park 2009; Krumland 2004). Our paper focuses on the actors therefore
101 we do not take the media itself in account.

102 As one of the most important factors in political processes, interests determine actions of
103 individuals. However, interests are not openly shown in public (Krott 2005). Interest is a the-
104 oretical factor to explain and forecast the actions of political actors. Their actions in using or
105 protecting the forest will follow their interests. Only seldom it strengthens the options for
106 the actors if they reveal their interests fully in public. Therefore we expect theoretically a
107 difference between public statement and interests. An interest can be identified by analyz-
108 ing the options and consequences of actions for specific actors. For the economic interests
109 of forest owners and timber industry, an economic analysis by Rosenkranz and Seintsch
110 (2016) shows, the implementation of a “new multifunctionality” in Germany (segregation of
111 forest functions and adapted forestry) causes a loss of 11,2 million m³ of timber harvested
112 per year (1 billion euro per year). We assume theoretically that such a loss in economic re-
113 sources will influence the actions of forests owners and timber industry in Germany. Be-
114 cause this will happen independently whether this argument is mentioned in the public de-
115 bate it makes theoretically sense to distinguish between public debate and interests.

116 Bach et al. (2016) explored the strong impact of bureaucratic interests on cooperative be-
117 havior within networks of state agencies and the effect on transnational governance on na-
118 tional administration. State agencies use elements of a regime that are favorable to their
119 objectives and field of responsibility, furthering their self-interests and blocking unfavorable
120 elements by not letting them entering into domestic policy or by weakening them by
121 lengthy implementation. Various domestic state agencies compete for staff, budget and po-
122 litical responsibility (Peters 2010; Olsen 2006; Niskanen 1974) including access and admin-
123 istration rights over political territories (Krott 2005).

124 The biggest theoretical challenge in this work was determining the link between actors' con-
125 tribution to the public media debate and interests, as we could not expect all important in-
126 terests to be openly communicated in public.

127 Often based on actors' interests, positions are defined as the publically stated preferences
128 toward specific policies (Burns and Giessen 2014; Wibowo and Giessen 2012). Political actors
129 can make active use of public media, expressing their positions in order to gain support for
130 their interests (Kleinschmit and Krott 2008). However, these actors generally do not trans-
131 parently disclose all aspects of and arguments surrounding a given issue within public media.
132 Rather, with their own select contributions to this public media, they may test whether they
133 can gain support for their positions and interests or even cause conflicts endangering their
134 legitimacy. Hence, for self-interested actors, the goal of public media debate is not open
135 discussion, but rather, a discussion that legitimizes their specific positions (Giessen et al.
136 2009; Hogl et al. 2012; Wibowo and Giessen 2015; Steffek 2009).

137 Public media rely on metaphors and other rhetorical devices. (Dryzek and Niemeyer 2008)-
138 In this vain Foucault (1991) describes expression-systems (a political language), which are
139 characterized by including, excluding, adding or deleting political words for gaining power
140 over specific policy issues. Within public media, actors use political language to support
141 their positions in public (Böcher 2012; Kleinschmit and Krott 2008; Krott 1985). Their main
142 means to achieve this include advancing specific topics while disregarding others as irrele-
143 vant (Sadath et al. 2013) and entering into a public media coalition with actors stating simi-
144 lar positions (Kleinschmit et al. 2009). The resulting selection of arguments is accompanied
145 by the selection of partners in the public media. Other actors may or may not acknowledge
146 and publicly appreciate a given contribution by a specific actor to the public media, which

can either add to or detract from the legitimacy of the contribution (Steffek 2009; Giessen et al. 2009). In addition, it is important to distinguish between actors' positions, as stated in public media, and their interests. The former are potentially ad-hoc, strategically articulated preferences on a given policy issue that are not necessarily intended to and may not actually correspond with action. In contrast, actors' interests are rather stable motivations that guide their actions. There are strong and long-lasting conflicts between the interests of different actors. Conflicts increase by goal incompatibility, perceived opportunity for interference, and interdependent activities among organizational subunits (Schmidt 1972). In public media debate, both conflict and harmony between the publicly stated positions of these actors may be created, depending on the perceived utility of an actor.

Based on the theoretical elements of the analytical program, public media, and interest-driven actors, we specify our research questions through the following five hypotheses:

H1. National fragmentation in international forest issues: In Germany, actors' positions displayed in public media debate regarding the issues addressed by the IFR-C are highly diverse.

Despite Germany's single, unified voice on international forestry issues at the world stage, the issues addressed by the IFR-C remain conflicting internally (McDermott et al. 2010). Thus, Germany's international position is formulated by the dominant power supporting a specific position, while national implementation incites conflict.

H2. Forest user versus forest protection interests: *The fragmentation of forest public media into the protection and user positions, which dominates the IFR-C, also dominates national public media.*

Within the IFR-C, the user and protection elements are competitive (Giessen 2013; Humphreys 2006). On the national level, a stable public media coalition pushing for the protection of forests stands against another coalition advocating for sustainable use, as well (Winkel 2007).

H3. Associations driving public media: *Forest and environmental associations are the drivers of the national public media debate on international forest policy issues.*

Forest and environmental associations lobby for the interests of their members (Krott 2005). They attempt to strengthen and legitimate their demands by playing an active role within the public media debate.

H4. Public alliances between forest associations and/or environmental associations and ministries: *In the pursuit of shared interests, associations form alliances with their main sectoral ministries within the public media debate.*

The relationship between forest associations and /or environmental associations and ministries is embodied by corporatism (Peters 2010; Krott 2005; Rayner et al. 2001). Despite conflicting interests, public and private actors can reap benefits by bargaining and adopting a shared position in international forestry issues. In compromising with associations, a ministry can gain highly valuable support for the implementation of policies. We also expected that corporatism would be evident in public media alliances between sectors.

H5: Strong interests within public media: *The strong interests of actors will become visible within the public media debate.*

For each actor, the public media is a resource for building political support. In addition, media outlets claim to be a critical fourth power that uncovers the truth. Therefore, we expected the strong interests of actors to be formulated within the public media.

This last hypothesis is linked to both H2 and H4. If the public media debate includes forest user versus forest-protection interests and uncovers the alliances between associations and sectoral ministries, it communicates a realistic picture of conflicting international forestry issues, supporting H5.

3. Methodological approach and empirical data collection

We sought empirical evidence for the hypotheses by combining the social science methods of content analysis of media, document analysis, and expert interviews. Document analysis was applied in the identification and description of the analytical program of the main international forestry issues. Such programs consist of public statements about the most important issues. They discuss how important existing problems are and how they might be solved in order to meet specific goals. Therefore, an analytical program was deemed a suitable tool for identifying both international forest policy issues and national issues relevant to Germany. The internet provided open access to all documents from analytical programs, which were then searched based on keywords related to forestry.

A qualitative content analyses is applied to the public media debate in print media as well as internet (Burns and Giessen 2014; Rahman and Giessen 2014; Wibowo and Giessen 2012).

Out of the print media the analysis covers one major German daily newspaper as well as specialized German journals on forest land use.

In the first category of major daily newspapers, we select the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* because it is a mainstream, widely distributed, and reputable paper with a national focus. Its readership is well-educated and politically left-leaning or ecologically minded, which is taken up by this newspaper in the selection of topics. We restricted the sample to one qualitative newspaper because former comprehensive analysis by Krumland (2004) showed that the public debate within the high quality newspapers do not differ much. For contrast, we also select an expert journal, *AFZ (Allgemeine Forst Zeitschrift)-Der Wald*, as well as the agrarian-focused journal *DLZ (dlz-agrarmagazin)*. Both are periodically published professional journals for forestry and agrarian practitioners and thus represent the public media of forestry and agriculture advocates and experts.

Relevant internet and print publications from the following major actors in forest policy (Krott 2005) were included in the analysis of international forest issues in Germany: the German Federal Ministry for Food and Agriculture (Bundesministerium für Ernährung und Landwirtschaft, or BMEL); the Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building, and Nuclear Safety (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, Naturschutz, Bau, und Reaktorsicherheit, or BMUB); the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung, or BMZ); the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie, or BMWi); the Federal Environmental Agency (Umweltbundesamt, or UBA); and the European Commission. Such publications of governmental departments aim to inform the citizens of governmental decisions, as well as provide services according to their mandates (Wibowo

and Giessen 2012; Rahman and Giessen 2014). Additionally, we analyzed articles of the German Private Forest Owner Association (Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Waldbesitzerverbände, or AGDW), the German Forestry Council (Deutscher Forstwirtschaftsrat, or DFWR), and the environmental non-governmental associations Greenpeace and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

The issues which were grounded in the program were selected for the content analysis of the public media debate. In the public media we looked for all statements by all actors namely state agencies, forest and environmental lobby groups. The content analysis covers all groups independent of their positions.

The media debate was covered from 2004 to 2014 because this period was highly dynamic in political activities of Germany in international regimes (Giessen 2012; 2013). The search engines of google and of the ministries and associations were used to filter the selected media with the keywords “forest,” “international forestry,” “national forest program,” “biodiversity,” “climate change,” “illegal logging,” “forest finance,” “tropical wood,” “certification,” “forest subsidization,” and “forest convention.” The resulting issues from this approach were grouped by theme and timeline. In total we found 53 articles. Out of them 5 articles are from the “Süddeutsche Zeitung” dealing with the determined issues, 15 publications of ministry websites, 7 articles from private forest owner associations, 12 articles from environmental NGOs, 12 articles from the AFZ, and 2 articles from the DLZ. Qualitative content analysis was used to filter out relevant forest policy issues in public media debate and main actors' positions.

We defined very strong positions (++) as very strongly demanded by the specific actors, e. g. a claim of Environmentalists “We have to stop the continuous loss of species”, or Forest

259 Owners claim “a security of property and land use rights” or “a strong utilization of forest
260 products to decrease the forest ‘CO2 storage capacity”. The strong positions (+) are not so
261 much stressed e. g. Forest Owners claim “an own Forest Convention for the forest sector
262 would be advisable”. If the issue is not mentioned by an actor we coded it with (0) (Tab.1).

263 By reading the articles and using qualitative content analysis, the main author identified the
264 involved actors and their positions (statements) in public and expert media (Sadath and
265 Krott 2013; Sadath et al. 2012; Neuman 2005). All the actors’ statements were then checked
266 by the co-authors on the team.

267 In addition, six expert interviews were conducted with civil servants from the Ministry of
268 Agriculture, the Ministry of Environment, the Environmental Agency, the Land Use Agency,
269 and the Northwest German Forest Association, as the most important institutions for inter-
270 national forest related issues covered up in this study. The objective of these interviews was
271 to identify current issues of direct concern to German forestry, as well as actors with domi-
272 nant and less dominant positions. The methodological aim of the interviews was to give us a
273 first hint on the issues we focused on. We selected experts of bureaucracies, because they
274 are well informed and not as bias as lobbyists from forest- and environmental associations
275 (Krott 2005). Therefore we did not interviewed lobbyists, but of course all arguments made
276 by them in public debate were analyzed. Based on the information by the interviews we pre-
277 selected issues and checked in documents whether they are part of the analytical program
278 based on law, budgets and binding guidelines.

279

280

4. Formal international forest issues relevant in Germany

International and national programs have included forest issues and claim to discuss formally the important problems, goals, and solutions in sustainable forestry. Based on the publicly accessible documents, the following eight international forest issues relevant to forest policy in Germany were identified.

4.1 Forest biodiversity

Convention on Biological Diversity

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) is an international legally binding treaty that was approved at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) by the UN member states in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It promotes the development of national strategies to advance the preservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of forests (CBD 1992).

Germany, as a UN member state, ratified the Convention on December 21, 1993, and approved in 2007 the German National Strategy on Biodiversity. Germany committed to complying with requirements for the national protection of biodiversity (BMUB 2007) and preparing national reports for the UN on the status of the implementation of the Convention (CBD 1992). The international issues of biodiversity and its protection are also reflected by German legislation. With the Federal Nature Conservation Act (2010), the German government cemented “conservation of biological diversity” as an issue in national conservation legislation. This act includes regulations for conserving wild animal and plant species and monitoring, eliminating, and preventing the spread of invasive species (BMUB 2010).

NATURA 2000

Another element supporting the international demand for the protection of biodiversity was the establishment of a European ecological network, NATURA 2000. By protecting important natural habitat types and species within the European Union, the network aims to ensure the diversity of wild species and habitats, as well as promote sustainable development (Süddeutsche Zeitung 21.05.2012). The first step in Germany's participation in the network was the incorporation of the EU regulations into German law via the Federal Nature Conservation Act (1998) and the subsequent amendment to the Act in 2013 (BMUB 2010).

4.2 The role of forests in climate change

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

Following the adoption of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 1992, as a UN member state, Germany ratified the Kyoto Protocol on May 31, 2002 (UNFCCC 2014), and committed in 2008 to develop a National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change (BMUB 2008). In 2005, the first steps were taken toward a comprehensive national adaptation protocol, which included legally non-binding national and regional strategies. The main focus of the German National Adaptation Strategy and regional strategies, including those in Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia (Logmani and Giessen 2016), is reducing the vulnerability of social, economic, and environmental systems. The adaptation strategies include forest conversion from monocultures to deciduous forest, one of the current projects in Germany responding to climate change (Logmani and Giessen 2016; Köhl 2011; Litschel and Schramm 2010; DLZ 2009).

Wood utilization and alternative energy sources

In complying with Kyoto Protocol requirements and reducing greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (1997), the use of wood products, with their ability to absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂), in combination with sustainable forest management is encouraged (Köhl 2011; Rock 2011; Rüter 2011; Süddeutsche Zeitung 13.04.2012). Additionally, the use of alternative energy sources, such as wind energy, is trending in Germany (Kaufer 2013; Bayrische Staatsforsten 2011).

4.3 Forest certification

Certification schemes support sustainable forest management (SFM), as described in the “Forest Principles” of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. SFM includes ecological, economic, and social practices that protect both forests and the sales potential of forest products. Within SFM, certification helps prevent illegal logging and marketing of imported illegal tropical wood and protect biodiversity. Forest certification schemes have emerged prominently in Germany. The most commonly employed systems are those of the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), which are independent NGOs with eco-labeling guidelines. Of the total German forest area, 75% is already PEFC-certified (AGDW 2011), reflecting a strong preference for this label.

4.4 Forest subsidies

In order to comply with SFM requirements, the forest sector relies on investment support from the EU, the German federal government, and the federal states of Germany. The main financial support at the EU level is from the Europäischer Landwirtschaftsfonds für die Entwicklung des ländlichen Raums (ELER) (BMEL 2006) for the implementation of programs

for agriculture and rural development of “Gemeinsame Agrarpolitik” (GAP). The national support program Verbesserung der Agrarstruktur und des Küstenschutzes (GAK) 2010 and state funding are also among the main sources of financial support for forestry (BMWf 2012; BMEL 2011).

4.5 Forest investments

Another financial resource for forest management in Germany is the Forest Climate Fund, which was established in 2013 with an annual sum of 35 million euros under the joint direction of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture (BMEL 2011) and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building, and Nuclear Safety. The Fund’s main aim is the financing of the adaptation of forests to climate change. However, due to the collapse of the CO₂ certificate market, the federal government reduced the payments from the Forest Climate Fund from 35 million to 7 million euros in 2013, a 75% reduction (AGDW 2013; BMUB 2012).

4.6 Forest sector strategies

The EU does not have any legal authority over forest policy; nevertheless, it aims to influence the forest sector via agricultural and environmental policy, principles of subsidiarity, and the concept of shared responsibility (EU Commission 2010). The instruments for increasing its influence include the EU Forest Strategy (1998) and the Forest Action Plan (2006), which established a framework to support SFM based on forest policies of the member states. This framework also emphasizes principles and recommendations formulated through the National Forest Programs (EU Commission 2010).

The German National Forest Program (2000) and its new edition, the Forest Strategy 2020 (2011), are intended to secure the necessary framework conditions to make SFM possible (BMZ 2012; BMEL 2011).

4.7 European forest convention

Initiated in 1990, Forest Europe is a pan-European political process for the sustainable management of the world's forests (Schneider 2005). Forest Europe's legally binding agreement (LBA), which is still in progress, aims to anchor SFM in international law. The LBA was negotiated by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) over four sessions. One of the important topics concerning Germany was the discussion of the administration of the LBA by a joint secretariat. The German government offered to host a UN secretariat in Bonn, financed by the member countries of the Convention and the German Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Several other possibilities were also suggested at the INCs in 2013: a treaty adopted by the UN or one serviced by the UN or a non-UN administration. The subsidiary bodies of the UN under consideration for administering the LBA were the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). Outside of the UN, the European Forest Institute (EFI) was considered. Other planned locations for the secretariat included Geneva (under UNECE and/or UNEP administration) and Rome (FAO administration). With the conclusion of negotiations at the end of 2013, it was decided that the UNECE and FAO would set up the LBA secretariat in Geneva through a treaty adopted by the UN.

391 **4.8 Illegal logging**

392 One of the most relevant forestry-related issues at an international level is the control of
393 illegal logging and globally marketed illegal tropical wood. This issue also influences
394 Germany, as a sales market for illegal tropical wood and products (Süddeutsche Zeitung
395 25.03.2008; 19.01.2011, Greenpeace 2003). A tool for combating illegal logging and trade,
396 the EU's Forest Law Enforcement, Governance, and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan of 2003 is
397 supported at the national level by the Act on Trade of Illegally Harvested Timber (HolzSiG),
398 adopted in May 2013. A key characteristic of the FLEGT Action Plan is a voluntary scheme to
399 ensure that only legally harvested timber is imported into the EU from countries agreeing to
400 participate in the scheme. Bilateral FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs)
401 between the EU and participants will include commitments from both parties to stop trade
402 in illegal timber, notably through a licensing scheme to verify the legality of timber exported
403 to the EU.

404 Because of its inability to cement agreements with every timber-producing country, the EU
405 adopted a renewed ordinance, the EU Timber Trade Regulation (EUTR), in March 2013. In
406 Germany, this ordinance must be implemented through the HolzSiG, which nationally
407 regulates imported wood from countries participating in FLEGT VPAs, as well as wood from
408 German private forests that appears on the trade market (AGDW 2011; BMEL 2011)

5. National public media debate on international issues

5.1 Conflicting positions on forest biodiversity

Environmental NGOs, such as WWF and Greenpeace, have a strong position on biodiversity. Generally, they criticize insufficient efforts to protect and promote biodiversity in Germany, reflected mainly through a continuous loss of species.

With Germany's adoption of the EU's NATURA 2000 as national law, environmentalists strongly criticized the insufficient implementation and funding provided by the EU for each German federal state (Süddeutsche Zeitung 21.05.2012; 17.05.2010). Furthermore, inconsistent funding between German states could result in a lack of progress in the implementation of FFH requirements, according to the WWF (2006). In contrast, the Baden-Wuerttemberg Forest Research Institute noted the visible progress in the designation of protection areas as, for example, FFH habitats in forests (Sippel 2007). German federal states such as Hesse, with 20.9% of its total area dedicated to NATURA 2000, and Baden-Wuerttemberg, with 27%, offer good examples of biodiversity protection (Sippel 2007; Stühlinger 2007). The AGDW describes German forest management alone as sufficient for achieving biodiversity goals (AGDW 2012). This claim, however, is rejected by the WWF and Greenpeace. These NGOs argue that, due to low political transparency and the exclusion of environmental NGOs from political decisions, forest owners still fail to protect and preserve biodiversity effectively (WWF 2013; Greenpeace 2013). We observed a pluralistic discourse between environmental associations and forest owner associations, the ministry of environment, and forest researchers.

5.2 Conflicting role of forests in climate change and consensus on wind energy

In discussions on how to approach climate change, there are conflicts between environmental associations, forest owners, and scientists. One relevant topic is the utilization of exclusively autochthonous tree species, which is strongly supported by the WWF (WWF 2007).

In contrast, associations of private forest owners, like the AGDW, describe this approach as counterproductive in combatting climate change (AGDW 2011). Forest experts of the Helmholtz Centre and the Northwest German Forest Research Institute (NW-FVA) support planting foreign tree species in German forests because of these species' greater potential for adaptation to climate change and high growth rates, which would lead to greater harvesting and income for forest enterprises in the future. Possible tree species for use include the North American Douglas spruce, grand fir, red oak, and Japanese larch (Bolte 2011; Spellmann et al. 2011). Nevertheless, Germany's national Adaptation Strategies on Climate Change and the adaptation strategies of Bavaria, Baden-Wuerttemberg, Hesse, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia do not reject the scientific recommendations for introducing foreign tree species with increased adaptation capacity to climate change (Logmani and Giessen 2016).

Conflicting positions also emerge regarding the non-utilization of forests as part of the German National Strategy on Biodiversity. Greenpeace calls for a 10 % transformation of German public forests into set-aside land with no cultivation by 2020, ecological forest management for 90% of all public forest areas by 2020, and a stop to logging of all beech stands in public forests older than 140 years (Greenpeace 2013). Forest research institutions, how-

ever, note that non-utilization of forests risks decreasing the forests' CO₂ storage capacity and lessening their contribution to carbon balance. Wood material utilization, on the other hand, could replace the use of other building materials that are energy-intensive to manufacture. The use of wood for energy could also reduce the utilization of fossil fuels and the resulting CO₂ emissions (Süddeutsche Zeitung 13.04.2012). According to these research institutes, compared with hardwood, coniferous wood has a longer retention period, and coniferous wood products have greater carbon storage capacity (Rock 2011; Rüter 2011). Such arguments are also strongly supported by the AGDW. Additionally, DFWR considers the utilization of wood from sustainably managed forests to be an active form of climate protection in terms of reducing greenhouse gases. Therefore, it is strongly opposed to an exclusion of forest areas from use without justification from expert opinions (DLZ 2007).

On the issue of wind energy in forests, no significant conflict was found. According to Greenpeace, wind energy can improve the power supply of rural areas; however, turbines should only be installed in certain forests and under certain conditions. From a nature conservation perspective, forests that are managed through an intensively silvicultural system and which consist of spruce and pine are suitable for such installations (Greenpeace 2013). The DFWR has also stressed the utilization of wind energy in forests as a significant contribution to the ecological turn in energy production (DFWR 2013) without explicitly addressing the conditions under which wind farms should be established.

5.3 Competing forest certification schemes

Conflicts between environmental associations and forest experts have arisen over which certification scheme is the most appropriate to support SFM. Environmental associations such as Greenpeace and the WWF describe the PEFC certification scheme as an eco-label

that does not meet the necessary standards for the protection of biodiversity or the mitigation of climate change (Greenpeace 2004b). The state governments of Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate have established objectives to support FSC certification, which is also strongly supported by NGOs (DLZ 2012). These states claim that other states with large forests, such as Bavaria, Hesse, and Saxony, have implemented responsible forest policies using FSC certification (WWF 2011). Opposing the FSC label, on the other hand, is the AGDW, whose members describe themselves as the founders of PEFC. Forest-sector actors (AGDW, as well as CEPF and IFFA) also operate at the national and international levels within the main decision-making bodies of the PEFC (Teegelbekkers 2013; AGDW 2011). Despite the efforts by some federal states to establish FSC for state forests, PEFC is still the most commonly used certification scheme in Germany. Support from the German government for increasing the use of the FSC scheme cannot be expected.

5.4 Private lobbying for forest subsidies and forest investments

Experts from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development, who deal with the implementation of agricultural and rural development policies, criticize what they see as the inadequate consideration of the forest sector for funding programs, which are mainly agrarian in focus rather than forestry-oriented. This can be observed in the allocation of funding, which has been much greater for agricultural than forestry-related measures (Jacobs 2011). According to a statement by the AGDW, the DFWR, and the German Farmer's Association (DBV) in 2013, the EU-Commission's proposals on the new ELER should be revised to meet the demands of the forest sector.

The reduction of the Forest Climate Fund by the federal government from a planned annual sum of 28 million to 7 million euros for 2013 (AGDW 2013; BMUB 2012) due to the collapse

of the CO₂ certificate market has also heated up the discussion of financial support for the forest sector. The president of the AGDW called the elimination of the promised funding a “punch” for private forest owners, who felt that the federal government had disadvantaged them within the forest sector. According to the AGDW, this reduction in funding would affect all forest-related actors and institutions and could lead to fewer alternatives to support sustainability in German forestry (AGDW 2013).

5.5 Multiple forest-sector strategies

In the past, the cooperation between BMEL and the AGDW, as well as between Greenpeace and the WWF, led to conflict in the establishment of the National Forest Program (2000) and its later edition, the Forest Strategy 2020 (2011), due to differences in priorities. Whereas the ministries and private owners attached more importance to timber production, environmental NGOs stressed preservation and protection of biodiversity. In 2006, BMEL convened the 18th Round Table to translate international forest-related resolutions into a national forest program for Germany. Participants included representatives of the ministries, private forest owner associations, timber trade, labor unions, and environmental associations. While the AGDW praised the progress of the Round Table and its plans for facing current issues and problems in German forestry (AGDW 2006), Greenpeace left dissatisfied with BMEL’s refusal to implement suggestions for forest conservation and the prevention of illegal logging and trade.

The National Forest Programme was not officially finalized, and it was eventually replaced by the Forest Strategy 2020. Because of its focus on maximum timber production, the Strategy has also been heavily criticized. According to environmental NGOs, the Strategy is seriously lacking in terms of preservation of the forest biosphere and biodiversity. Greenpeace, the

WWF, and other environmental NGOs continue to call for a stronger focus on forest ecosystem protection instead of timber production; an integration of CBD requirements, the FFH directive, and the Wild Bird Directive; the protection of beech forests; the preservation of valuable forest components; a stronger focus on FSC certification; the amendment of the German Federal Hunting Law for improved game management; a reduction in the allowable cut; and, finally, greater consideration of all nature conservation matters (WWF 2011).

5.6 The European Forest Convention

The European Forest Convention, an international legally binding instrument, is currently under negotiation and has been discussed for about 14 years (Schneider 2005). According to Schneider (2005), leadership problems in the international forest regime have caused a lack of transparency in collaborative policies, resulting in fragmentation of the regime. These problems can be attributed to the conflicting interests of a large number of associations and the resulting agreements regulating forest-related issues. The AGDW stresses the integration of demands made by its president during a meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiation Committee 2 in Bonn, addressed, in part, to the BMEL. These demands included recognition of the security of property and land use rights as one of Europe's most enduring achievements, support for the social recognition of the forest sector's enormous potential, and an end to the misuse of forestry as a playing field for policymakers using subsidiarity as a means to achieve SFM.

5.7 Sector conflicts in illegal logging

The issue of illegal logging has recently received a great deal of public attention due to the adoption of the EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) and the HolzSig in 2013. Referring to the economic problems caused by the trade in illegally harvested timber, the WWF specifically

545 criticized the unfair competition between enterprises that produce goods illegally and those
546 that do comply with the EUTR. The Association of German Timber Traders (GD Holz) also
547 expects significant obstacles for the import of wood. All companies that import wood within
548 the internal market are governed by “due diligence” (information, risk assessment, and risk
549 minimization), which can lead to substantial expense for these enterprises (Goebel 2012).
550 According to BMEL, compulsory control and inspection for the marketing of legally harvested
551 wood should not apply to small-scale forest owners. However, BMUB has voted against this
552 proposal, pointing to the risks of incorrectly splitting forest enterprises along hectare-
553 dividing lines (Leßner 2009).

554 In sum, on the issue of illegal logging, environmental associations and the Ministry of
555 Environment support one position, while the Ministry of Land Use and GD Holz argue against
556 further restrictions of trade.

6. Actors driving public media debate strategies

Actors 1-7	ASSOCIATIONS (forest/environment)		MINISTRIES		RESEARCH	INDUSTRY	
Issues	Forest Owners	Environmentalists	Envir. Ministry	Ministry Landuse	(diverse)	Renew. Energy	Timber
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Biodiversity	+ ⚡	⚡ ++ ⚡ ⚡	⚡ ++	0	⚡ +	0	0
Climate Change	++ ⚡	⚡ ++ ⚡	⚡ ++	0	⚡ ++	0	0
Certification	++ ⚡	⚡ ++ ⚡	0	⚡ +	0	0	0
Financial support	++ ⚡	0	0	⚡ +	0	0	0
Forest Investments	++ ⚡	0	⚡ +	⚡ +	0	0	0
Forest sector strategies	+ ⚡	⚡ ++ ⚡	0	⚡ +	0	0	0
Forest Convention	+ ⚡	0	0	⚡ ++	0	0	0
Illegal logging	0	++ ⚡	+ ⚡	⚡ ++ ⚡	0	0	⚡ ++

Tab. 1: The importance of the international forest policy issues reflected by the actors' positions and resulting fields of conflicts. Position of actors: ++ very strong; + strong; 0 no position found; ⚡ existing fields of conflict.

The positions of actors with regard to the main international forest policy issues are shown in Table 1. For every issue, there are conflicting arguments between different actors. These data support strongly H1, that the positions in international forestry issues are fragmented and conflicting.

H2 expected that the fragmentation of the IFR-C into protection and user positions would be reflected by the public media debate on the national level. The data in Table 1 identify only one out of eight issues in which protection positions join together against the user position.

Within the public media debate on illegal logging, environmental associations along with the Ministry of Environment oppose the Ministry of Land Use, which supports the Convention.

Another hint to the lack of cohesive positions is evidence in Table 1. Out of 11 conflicting positions, only in three cases do the actors with protection interests jointly argue against the

actors representing user interests. On the issue of forest certification, the forest owner associations and the Ministry of Land Use argue jointly against the environmental associations. The forest sector's strategy is also criticized by the associations, who oppose the arguments of the forest owner associations and the Ministry of Land Use. Finally, illegal logging is criticized by joint arguments of the environmental associations and the Ministry of Environment. For most issues of conflict, however, such alliances within the public media debate cannot be found. Therefore, the hypothesis that the fragmentation of the IFR-C into use and protection positions would also dominate the national public media debate cannot be supported. A pluralistic approach is much more frequently used by actors in public media debate. The third hypothesis, H3, expected associations to be the drivers of public media debate. Table 2 summarizes the results and shows that, out of 33 conflicting positions, only four were not formulated by associations. The Ministry of Land Use is the target of critique in eight conflicts, whereas the Ministry of Environment is the target in only five conflicts. The data clearly indicate that associations are the main actors espousing critical positions in public, while the ministries are less visible in conflicts.

Actors	Associations		Ministries		Research	Industry
	<i>Forest-owners</i>	<i>Environmentalists</i>	<i>Environmental</i>	<i>Landuse</i>	<i>(diverse)</i>	<i>Timber and renewable Energies</i>
Conflicts in total	7	10	5	8	2	1
Conflict with Assn	4	4	3	6	2	0
Conflict with Ministry	3	5	1	1	0	0
Conflict with sectoral Ministry	3	2	-	-	0	0
Joint position with Ministry and Assn.	2	1	1	2	0	0

Tab. 2: Number of conflicts and joint positions of actors in public media debate

H4 assumed that the public media debate would reflect corporatism, meaning that within sectors, ministries and associations would form alliances for the public media debate. Such sector alliances, however, were rare in the public media debate we analyzed. Alliances were formed only three times, while there were 33 conflicting positions.

Finally, H5 dealt with the relationship between public media and actor interests, expecting that strong actor interests would become visible within the public media debate. The high frequency of conflicts mentioned in public media supports the hypothesis of a realistic public media debate. However, the lack of empirical evidence for H2 and H4, which dealt with political alliances, confirms that not all strong interests are expressed in the media. The media do not make the basic conflicts between user and protection interests in forest issues visible and do not publicly reveal the alliances between actors within specific sectors. Therefore, the empirical findings do not fully support the hypothesis that the public media visibly covers all strong interests of actors.

In addition, one empirical result should be noted. Industry actors did not take part in the public media debate on international forest issues (see Table 1). These actors have strong interests in a healthy supply of raw material from the forests, either for wood products or energy, and such interests are strongly influenced by international forest issues. Therefore, the lack of engagement in the public media debate by these actors is not congruent with their interests. It is clear that public media debate does not exhibit these important aspects, but it is much more difficult to explain the ignorance of industrial actors.

7. Discussion

Muddling through interest-driven, fragmented public media debate

The first aim of the research was to identify the national forest policy issues in Germany which correspond to those of the IFR-C. We found strong evidence that eight major issues of the IFR-C also became issues of forest policy in Germany. For example, they became part of national policy programs, such as the National Strategy of Biodiversity, certification schemes, and laws regulating sustainable forestry. Furthermore, the Forest Convention is a major subject of forest foreign policy in Germany. Overall, Germany's forest policy responded actively to the different initiatives of the IFR-C. Due to the high importance of IFR-C issues, we can conclude that forest policy in Germany reflects major international issues well.

The second question investigated how the public media debate in Germany deals with these issues. We found strong empirical evidence that the pluralistic approach of actors in the media enhances the fragmentation of the IFR-C. The different actors put forth their individual positions on international issues, amplifying conflicts. There is no evidence for the formation of coalitions in public media debate or the formulation of a joint statement from different sectors. Even the opposition between the environmental and forest sectors, which has caused fragmentation of the IFR-C, is not evident in the public media debate in Germany.

Our third question asked how the public media debate can be explained by the interest-driven strategies of different actors. The hypothesis that associations drive the conflicting public media debate was strongly supported by empirical evidence. This means that the assumption of the pluralism theory that associations organize and promote interests in media explains the fragmentation of the public media debate well. The drivers of conflicting positions in public media debate in Germany are far from reaching a unified national position in

632 international forest issues. The media fragmentation clearly shows that the implementation
633 of the IFR-C has not been met by one unified national position, but instead highly fragment-
634 ed public media. The national media will neither jointly reject nor support a specific position
635 of the IFR-C. The IFR-C will have to muddle through fragmented media positions.

636 The dominant pluralistic public media debate strategy is not shared by ministries. Media
637 critique of ministries is rare, even if the issues are highly controversial in internal politics. The
638 ministries shape their arguments in public media debate within their realms of legal
639 authority (Peters 2010; Olsen 2006; Krott 2005; Niskanen 1974). The formal and clear
640 distinction and distribution of jurisdictions among ministries therefore hinders balanced
641 public media debate on issues across these sectors. According to Downs (1967) and Bach et
642 al. (2016), ministries can use preferred elements of a regime in their field of responsibility,
643 furthering their self-interests and blocking non-preferred elements in domestic policy or
644 ignoring them in public media debate.

645 The results show strategic selection of issues by actors. Despite being the most active and
646 critical voice, environmental associations do not intervene in the public media of forest sub-
647 sidies and investment. Such public media debate seems to be a purely internal sectoral con-
648 flict between the Ministry of Land Use and the association of forest owners. Even more strik-
649 ing is the absence of the timber and bioenergy industries from the public media. The strong
650 interest of these industries in the raw materials of the forest is evident, in contrast with their
651 silence in media. Although the empirical evidence strongly confirms that such “black holes”
652 in the public media debate exist, we cannot offer a hypothesis to explain this phenomenon.

653 Nevertheless, reviewing the strategies of the actors can partly explain why the public media
654 debate is not comprehensive in covering all important positions in international forest is-

655 sues. Environmental associations loudly proclaim their position, whereas ministries are re-
656 luctant to publicize conflicts in policy. Industry actors do not participate in the forest-related
657 public media debate in Germany. The public media on international forest issues in Germa-
658 ny shows that fragmentation exists on both the national and international levels. The IFR-C
659 has not created this fragmentation but has not been able to reduce it, either.

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8. Conclusions

For drawing conclusions it is essential to keep the limits of the concept of public debate in mind. The public debate consists only of the statements of different actors in public. In contrast to the theoretical concept of discourse (Leipold 2014; Winkel 2013; Winkel et al. 2011; Arts et al. 2009; Hajer 2009; Kleinschmit et al. 2009) the debate is restricted to formulated arguments. The debate does not determine how these arguments are related to the intended actions of the actors. The actors might disclose their interests or they might hide it. The discourse concept tries strongly to link arguments in the discourse with intended actions of actors. The theories of discourse specify the complex relation between discourse and actions of actors (Dryzek 2008; Jenkins-Smith and Sabatier 1994; Foucault et al. 1991; Sabatier 1988). In our paper we had the much more modest goal to get information about the arguments formulated in public debate and to compare them with interests. This theoretical bases differs in its basic assumptions from discourse theory substantially. Therefore it makes not much sense to discuss our data from the point of view of discourse theory.

Relying on this restriction of our data our results indicate that not all institutional elements of the IFR-C are treated equally by policy actors in Germany. The specific international forest issues selected by these actors do not reflect the full breadth of the IFR-C (Giessen 2013). This selection occurs differently in different countries (Wibowo and Giessen 2012; Burns and Giessen 2014), leading us to the conclusion that the specific national public media debate, issues, and policies shape the perception of the IFR-C in each country. This diversity of domestic views on the IFR-C, which, itself, promotes a homogeneous view, leads to vertical fragmentation in terms of diverse actors, interests, institutions, and constituencies (Biermann et al. 2009). The results further lead to the conclusion that international regime com-

plexes will be perceived and implemented quite differently within different domestic contexts. This has implications for the actual impacts of regime complexes and the study of regime consequences and effectiveness (Underdal and Young 2004). Hence, our results indicate that instead of using international influence to study the effects of regime complexes, a pathways approach is more appropriate (Bernstein and Cashore 2012).

Our results further reveal that actors in the domestic public media debate on international forest policy issues select their contributions and non-contributions intentionally and strategically. In doing so, they may actively shape the public media debate by introducing an intended bias towards their own preferences (Kleinschmit 2012; Giessen et al 2009). For stressing their own preferences and giving them more emphases, actors form alliances, which were shown in this approach by 3 examples. However these alliances were not clearly revealed in the media.

Thus, analyzing the public media debate provides interesting yet preliminary insights into the effects and influence of international forestry issues.

Our study illustrates that public media debate on international forest-related issues is not equivalent to the politics or actors' positions on these issues. In public media debate, conflicting views and interests are downplayed, while positions and politics are characterized by conflict (Kleinschmit and Sjöstedt 2014). Hence, analyzing interest-driven domestic politics surrounding selected issues of the IFR-C provides a necessary supplement to discourse-oriented analyses of international forest policy in specific countries (McDermott et al. 2010). However, the very critical and decisive points of conflict and even some entire issues may not be disclosed by any actor in public media debate. Thus, an analysis of the influences of actors and institutions on international forest policy should be complemented by an analysis

of the conflicting issues, interest-driven politics, and resulting domestic policies and policy changes (Bernstein and Cashore 2012). This requires in-depth insight into domestic politics and policies and individual actors.

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1029

1030 **Tables**

1031 **Tab. 1:** The importance of international forest policy issues reflected by actors' positions and
1032 resulting fields of conflict

1033 **Tab. 2:** Number of conflicts and joint positions of actors in media discourse

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