

National Forest Programmes in Scandinavian Political Culture

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Abstract

National forest programme (NFP) as a new forest policy tool, was launched in the Rio Summit in 1992. It emphasizes participation, delegation and inter-sectoral coordination. The adaptation of these principles in the forest policy in Finland, Norway and Sweden are discussed in this paper. The stage of the NFP process in each of them is very different in spite of the common structural features in the political culture. Separate policy actions related to the identification of sustainable forest management were arranged in Finland (forest specific environmental program in 1994) and in Norway (Living Forests program in 1998) whereas in Sweden a specific process has not been identifiable prior to Environmental Code 1999 and Quality Criteria. The compulsory processes towards regional forest programs in Finland promoted delegation and regional participation. No NFP- specific revisions in delegation has been named in Norway or Sweden. The Finnish government had an incentive to start a participatory political process towards NFP in order to maintain and even increase public subsidies to timber management investments, whereas Norway and Sweden had already abandoned such subsidies.

Keywords: corporatism, forest policy programmes, political culture.

1. Introduction

A new forest policy tool, National Forest Programme (NFP), has been developed through the international forest policy dialogue started in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. Since then, a concept of NFP is frequently referred to in the consecutive UN forums: the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF), the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) and United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF). In 1997 IPF encouraged countries to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate national forest programmes. In the European level, Ministerial Conference on Protecting Forest Environment has worked towards common approach for NFPs since 1999.

National sovereignty is appreciated, and customary and traditional rights are recognized in NFP process (eg. land tenure arrangements, rights of indigenous people and local communities). Consistency with each country's sustainable development strategies is also required (Egestad 1999). The transparency and comparability between national solutions is arranged through criteria and indicators (C&I). The European C&I target was included into the resolution of the 2nd Ministerial Conference in Helsinki, Finland and the operational level guidelines accepted in the 3rd conference in Lisbon in 1998.

Finland, Norway and Sweden, discussed in this study, have long multiparty parliamentary traditions accompanied with open participation in political processes. The countries share common features related to political culture and its implementation in forest policy context (Berge & Saastamoinen 2002, Lönnstedt 1999, Svensson 2004).

All the three Scandinavian countries have participated both UN and European processes but the path towards formal NFP has been different. Finland has implemented NFP since 1999, Norway is starting the process towards formal NFP program and Sweden is in the way of initiating the program preparation (see national reports to the UN process: Finland 2002, 2003, Norway 2002, 2003, Sweden 2002, 2003 and Nilsson 2001). The purpose of this paper is to discuss on the differences between Finland, Norway and Sweden in the implementation of IPF and IFF targets in general and those implemented through NFPs.

2. Forest tenure structures and political culture in Scandinavian countries

Scandinavian countries share many common features in the characteristics of forest land tenure and timber related economic interests as well as in political culture:

1) *stable multi-party parliamentary democracy*. The political power on legislative level is concentrated to the Parliament in all three countries. Many political parties are represented in parliaments. The political power on executive level has been characterised by a long series of coalition governments. Coalition governments have been more common in Finland and Norway than in Sweden (eg. Tiihonen 2000). Frequent government changes due to political controversies and shifts in the power structures of Parliament have been typical in Finland and Norway and the majority governments of the Social Democratic Party in Sweden have not meant much difference. The steps towards a modern industrialized welfare society have been the major political target in all of these countries. The role of the Royal Family is symbolic both in Norway and Sweden whereas the President of Finland has some political power in Foreign Affairs.

2) *economic structures and institutions based on free competitive market transactions and private entrepreneurship*. Non-industrial private forest (NIPF) land tenure is preferred and consequent supportive structures are maintained in the countries. Forest land tenure is dominated by fragmented private ownership. Tenure share of NIPF-owners is 54 % in Finland (440 000 holding units), 76 % in Norway (125 000 holding units), and 51 % in Sweden (125 000 holding units) (Hyttinen & Tikkanen 1999, Lönnstedt 1999, Nyruud 1999). Commercial timber production has been the major source of utilities from forests implying a strong advocacy among timber related NGOs in the forest policy arena. All three countries are highly industrialized with strong export oriented forest industries. The current value share of timber related industries in export is 26 % in Finland, 14 % in Sweden, and 6 % in Norway. Political power structures among interested parties in forest sector policy have deteriorated in time due to the diminished employment and export income share of forest industries.

3) *well-organized advocacies and functional coalitions among the major functional NGOs*. The power structures in the three countries have been characterised by power sharing among the major political parties and divergent minority parties. Power structures have provided for neo-corporatist arrangements (Lijphart 1999). The core of the neo-corporatist agenda follows from the principle that functional interests tend to act towards consensus procedures (Pregernig 1999). The functionally organised interests of NGO's are arranged in the neo-corporatist concentrations through the recognised, representational participants (cf. Kalnes 2001). Corporatism is identifiable through the arrangements of political power by monopoly representation, internal hierarchies and an authority of leadership that commits members (Knutson 1997). Diversified political structures accompanied with weak political power of Parliament tend to promote the strong presence of NGOs on political arenas.

The structural features of political cultures can be traced by analysing the power

distributions between the public bureaucrats and the representatives of the relevant NGO's in the political arena (Rommetvedt 2002). The taxonomy of political cultures can be based on the identification of power concentrations among public and private actors at the legislative (Parliament) and executive (Government) levels of the political arena respectively (cf. Heinz et.al. 1993). The lobbyist political actions of NGOs on the legislative level are excluded here and the survey concentrates relations on the executive level. Representation of the major timber related NGOs through advocacies and the formation of coalitions at the executive level have been especially strong in wage and price contracting. These activities also developed in timber trade in the 1970's when macroeconomic income policy was an essential part of the financial policy and macroeconomic policy in general (Pekkarinen 1990).

4) *Diversified NIPF-owners dominate forest land tenure.* The average size of individual NIPF forest holdings is small in all three Nordic countries, implying irregular cuttings and a variable market supply of timber. The dominance of domestic roundwood trade has promoted collective bargaining among the market parties. Well-functioning NIPF-owner associations and their coalitions have been typical in each country paralleled by collective interests among forest industry firms.

3. Forest policy institutions

Governmental decision making

The political power of the executive level in forestry issues in the Nordic countries is vested in the corresponding Ministry (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in Finland, Ministry of Agriculture in Norway and Ministry of Industry Employment and Communication in Sweden). None of the countries have a separate ministry for forestry issues, but Finland and Norway have ministerial departments for forest-related. In Sweden, the Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communication accommodates a small forest policy section for managing forestry issues in the political arena.

Forestry-specific national public agencies are responsible for policy implementation in Norway and in Sweden, whereas this kind central agency is missing in Finland. State-owned commercial forests are managed by a separate company and commercial interests are separated from the non-commercial in all countries. Non-commercial interests are controlled by forest authorities in Sweden and Norway but by environmental authorities in Finland (Forest and Park Service).

Central forestry administration

A strong central public office, national board of forestry with regional district organisations, had executive tasks in forest policy in all three countries up to the 1990's. In Finland, a sectoral ministry department replaced the Forest and Park Service in 1991 which simplified the delegation of policy implementation. Regional forestry boards (13 in Finland, 9 in Norway and 10 in Sweden) command policy implementation and supervision at regional level.

Strong structures among timber related NGOs

The implementation of forest policy at the local level is in the duty of self-governed associations under the supervision of district forestry boards in Finland and Norway. The Forestry Districts in Sweden do not have separate local organisations to assist forest owners.

The administrative structures permit large internal self government rather than public regulation (regulated self regulation) in all three countries. The principal timber related actors in forest policy arena have similar patterns in the three countries. There is single advocacy for non-industrial private forest owners in Finland and Sweden, but *two separate advocacies are identifiable in Norway (the co-operative and independent respectively)*. Organisations represent forest owners both at the legislative and executive levels. They also have direct commercial interests in Norway and Sweden, but in Finland, commercial activities are carried out by a separate co-operative corporation.

The Norwegian Pulp and Paper Association and Norwegian Sawmill Industries are separate, but in Finland and in Sweden forest industries federations represent both the mechanical as well as pulp and paper industries. These associations represent and monitor the interests of their members, while advancing a broader public understanding of their entrepreneurial activities.

The non-profit forestry associations in Finland, Norway and Sweden are mainly responsible on the promotion of the social understanding of forestry. As a central NGO representing the major forest related interest actors, they organize forestry conferences and excursions, and provide information about the forest sector as.

4. What is an NFP?

Substantive inter- sectoral policy preparation, extensive participation, and the decentralization and empowerment of regional and local authorities are among the explicit targets in the NFP policy process. The major innovations in the NFP policy agenda are partnership and participatory mechanisms that involve all interested parties. The NFP also introduces explicit conflict management (Glück et.al. 2003b). The policy agenda based on open access, participatory, interactive processes has been gradually developed as a tool towards sustainable forest management. The new policy arena, predicated upon the NFP process, will broaden the social base of participants and extend the sphere of public authorities that are involved (Berge & Aasen 2000).

In the previous policy process, only relevant public authorities and coalitions of the most influential NGO's concerned were invited to participate in policy formation: a process characterized by top-down procedures with symbolic inter-sectoral co-ordination, consensus orientation and persuasion agendas. The excludable policy institutions gradually developed into permanent policy formation networks with relatively permanent relationships and interactions between public and private actors that strived to realize common aims (Pregernig 1999, Ollonqvist 2002 a,b).

Adaptive and iterative learning are intended to be employed in the NFP process. The need for substantial inter- sectoral coordination makes it necessary among the ministries concerned to put more effort and resources into policy formulation when conflicting interests are concerned. Intra-bureaucratic intermediation processes and capacity building among the new entrants have become important procedural issues. The principles to be applied in the implementation, links to other policy means, as well as legal regulation and financial incentives are still to be decided (Glück et.al.2003a).

5. Adaptation to post Rio era in national forest policy

The international commitments established during the early 1990's, the UN and European ministerial resolutions among the major ones, pushed the process towards sustainable forest

management in the three countries (see an international comparison Yudego 2002). The key interested parties in forest policy were poorly prepared for the bottom-up policy formulation process. The traditional forest policy network even had difficulties to identify the relevant new interested parties and institutions to be included in the policy process (in Finland see Palo 1993, Viitala 2003).

Introducing new inter- sectoral coordination

The preparatory actions, preceding the formal new policy, transformed inter-sectoral coordination and extended participation. In Finland, the environmental forest program process was a joint effort of the forestry and environmental ministries with major related NGO's intensifying the inter- sectoral participation (Environmental Program ... 1994). The extended participation of governmental and non-governmental environmental organizations promoted the adoption of new communicative rationality into the policy agenda. The environmental program, accepted in 1994, initiated the comprehensive revision of legal background in forestry and became the basic statement on Finnish forest policy during the 1990s. In Norway, the participatory approach in the preparation of the Living Forest- program had parallel structure what concerns the distribution of the stakeholders. They achieved consensus over 23 Standards included into 6 Criteria and 95 Indicators of sustainable forest management (Sanness 2002) and Living Forest- resolution achieved official status in Norway when accepted in 1998 (Lindstad 2002a). Living Forest program implemented the general issues on ecological sustainability, accepted by the Norwegian parliament in 1996, into forestry. The comprehensive policy revision related to sustainable forest management has thereafter passed Norwegian Parliament in 1999. In Sweden, ecological sustainability and ecosystem management were included in the forestry legislation in 1994. The new coordinated forest environmental code and environmental quality objectives have been accepted by the parliament. The relevant indicators are under preparation (Nilsson 2001). The intensification of inter-sectoral coordination among forestry and environmental authorities and relevant NGO's was promoted by "a richer forest campaign" during 1987–1994, preceding the legislation reform (Svensson 2004).

Criteria and Indicators to measure SFM implementation

The criteria and indicators, the tools for gathering and assessing information on the success in implementing the general guidelines of sustainable forest management, were described in the resolutions of 2nd European Ministerial conference and agreed in the follow-up Expert Meeting in 1994. The six European criteria were accompanied by indicators measuring the fulfillment of the criteria. Finland was among the pioneers to formulate national criteria and indicators in 1995 (Eeronheimo et.al. 1997). The Living Forest- process had the same objective in Norway during 1995-1998. The consensus in Norway was not achieved before the international consensus over the operational guidelines was achieved. in the 3th Ministerial conference in 1998. Sweden has actively participated to forest policy activities towards national criteria and indicators. The follow up- measurements on the 15 officially accepted objectives are currently under preparation in Sweden.

International consensus over national criteria and indicators laid the basis for development of a Pan-European Forest certification scheme (Mäntyranta 2002). Forest certification provided a convenient way to pass the slow national criteria and indicator- process and achieve a rapid response to the commercial interests related to sustainable forest management in forest product

market. Finland, Norway and Sweden were among the 11 European countries to launch the Pan-European Forest Certification system in 1999.

Timber related financial policy targets and NFP process

Public subsidies were provided for timber production investments in Finland, Norway and Sweden up to the late 1980's to support intensive timber production. Parallel dimensions of sustainability (economic, ecological and social) in the sustainable forest management objective challenged the patterns of these investments and timber related commercial interests in countries like Finland, Norway and Sweden with strong forest sector. The structure of the public subsidies on forestry was thoroughly changed in Norway and Sweden when implementing the new enlarged policy objective. Direct subsidies for timber production investments were totally abolished in Sweden in 1993 and in Norway ten years later.

The Norwegian internal self-financing, based on the a mandatory reinvestment of revenues from the timber trade to a forest trust fund was preserved as the major source of funds on timber production investments in 2003 reform (Norway 2003). The indirect subsidies through federal income tax deductions were preserved (Øistad 2001). In Finland, public subsidies for timber management investments were preserved by the Act on the Financing of Sustainable Forestry in 1997. These subsidies were involved into the major forest policy instrument of NFP in Finland contrary to Norway and Sweden. In Sweden, the abolition of public subsidies for timber production was a part in the restructuring the public administration of timber management in private forestry in the early 1990's (Sandström 2002). Capital income taxation substituted prior forest taxation, and tax reductions became the major source of public incentives in timber management. Direct public subsidies were available for environmental, recreational and cultural heritage activities.

6. New participation charge challenges forest policy arena

The formation of partnerships in the forest policy arena is among the necessary conditions for a substantial NFP process, i.e. open access participation and an interactive, iterative program process (Glück et al 2003b). However, the management of the policy preparation on climate change, biodiversity conservation and rights of indigenous people have proved to be challenging in the Scandinavian political culture. Cultural traditions, together with country's political culture and patterns, have turned out to be significant supporting or impeding factors in the NFP process. These issues were evaluated in COST E19 action¹ (Glück et.al. 2003).

The major propositions of COST E19 action concerning political culture, presented below, do not explain the differences in NFP process between the three Scandinavian countries.

Proposition 1. Social and political culture supporting the NFP process of the country secure rights of participation, provide adequate conflict resolution and adaptiveness, as well as the government's anticipatory and active approach to problem solving and its tendency to make decisions through achieving agreement between interested parties.

The public forestry authorities have been active initiators and monitors of the forest

¹ The COST E19 Action "National Forest Programmes in a European Context" was organised during 2000-2003 to get together forest policy researchers 20 participating countries to evaluate "conceptual essentials" of NFP process. Action based on EFI Seminar in Freiburg (1998), MCPFE Workshop in Tulln (1999) concentrated to four issues related to the policy arena and agenda: Participatory mechanisms (including conflict management), Collaborative approaches (partnership for implementation), Holistic and inter sectoral approaches and Iterative process with long-term commitment. The country reports from 20 participating countries indicate variety of interpretations and solutions to the NFP initial (Humpreys D. 2004).

policy actions in all three countries. The environmental issues in forestry have been administered by the corresponding public authorities. Inter-sectoral co-ordination in environmental forestry issues has been initiated in all three countries but with unequal time schedule.

Proposition 2. Close co-operation between government and a selected number of employers' and employees' interest groups is an impeding factor of participation, co-ordination and conflict resolution capacities in NFP processes with regard to involving actors outside such a narrow policy network. If, as it is most frequently found, the leadership for steering the NFP process is the forest administration and participation is focused on the traditional clientele (forestry and forest industry), then this impedes inter-sectoral co-ordination in an NFP process.

Neo-corporatist features have been dominant in the forest policy arena in all the three countries up to the early 1990's. The strong and extensive influence of neo-corporatist policy mode is still clearly visible in, for instance, the low interests to establish adequate conflict management planning.

Proposition 3. If the political culture of a country is able to deliver government driven forest programmes, then this likely leads to moderate or low participation, low inter-sectoral co-ordination and low conflict resolution capacities, as well as "command and control" policy instruments. The more rigid the distribution of power among formal authorities (e.g. ministries, departments), the less likely it is that inter-sectoral co-ordination will occur.

Sector-oriented public administration and corresponding policy actions support the preparation of segmented policies, and the Scandinavian style of participation has been sector segmented. The attempts advance substantial, inter-sectoral co-operation among forestry and environmental authorities has been clearly visible in all three countries.

The governance pattern in the Scandinavian countries has had features identified in political science as regulated self regulation (see Rayner & Howlett 2003). The outcome of NFP process in Finland was different from that in Norway and Sweden. Classical NFP achieved in Finland, implies strong public capacity with respect to that of NGO's. Equivalent to NFP outcome, achieved in Norway and Sweden, implies strong NGO's with respect to public capacity. The latter outcome means that countries have joined to UNFF process without the accepted formal policy agenda of NFP process. Strong public capacity to policy processes, overcoming the structural weaknesses due to the fragmented ownership and regional specialities, has been a necessary condition to make substantial participation to UNFF process. The major differences between the countries can be identified with the type of NFP achieved. The strong position of closed neo-corporatist policy networks in the forest policy arena is visible in the Scandinavian countries (Hilden et al.1999). The consensus over national criteria and indicators, among the fundamental issues when identifying the ecological dimension of the sustainable forest management objective, opened up new partnership elements into forest policy when environmental programs were prepared (Environmental Forestry Program in Finland in 1994 and Living Forests in Norway in 1998). Partnership elements were introduced in the preparation of NFP in Finland (public hearings, interactive web pages etc). However, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry invited a closed expert policy community to participate in the preparation of NFP, and the program process turned out to be a convenient vehicle to broaden and deepen the neo-corporatist policy network by inviting new relevant interested parties into the process (see discussion in Rayner & Howlett 2003).

The political decision concerning a formal NFP process has already been made in the Parliaments of Norway and Sweden, and the relevant agenda and arena have been evaluated. Finland's National Forest Programme 2010 (1999) was clearly different from its predecessors.

Unlike the previous program processes, it was the first stemming from a government initiative and having governmental commitment. The formal acceptance of the key ministries and political parties in the Government has been achieved, as the three subsequent governments have continued the NFP process. Comprehensive political acceptance has been achieved without parliamentary authority because of the shifts in the party structure of the coalition government. The formal authorisation of the programme in Finland has made it a binding forest policy framework. The commitment of the key ministries, the Ministry of Finance in particular, and the parties in power, has provided better opportunities to incorporate expenses, e.g. indirect and direct public subsidies, into the State budget in order to enforce the programme.

7. Conclusions

It has been a challenging task for the governments of the three Scandinavian countries to adopt open access participatory processes and to include, ecological, social and cultural sustainability in parallel with the economic aims of forest policy. The new policy agenda and arena have been developed in several transparent international forums. Those arranged by United Nation (IPF, IFF, Forum on Forests) and Ministerial Conferences on the Protection of Forests and the Council of the European Union at the European level have challenged the old consensus oriented policy arrangements in Finland, Norway and Sweden. The co-operative activities among interested parties in forestry and the environment in the policy arena have witnessed the ability to adapt parallel internal incentives to substantial co-operation.

In Finland, the early joint effort of forest and environment authorities and major NGO's in the preparation of forest specific environmental program in 1994 proceeded substantial inter-sectoral policy coordination. Similar consensus in Norway in 1998 on the identification of sustainable forestry (Living Forests program) paved way to a formal NFP process. The policy activities in Sweden concerning an environmental policy for forestry related to the environmental code are on going and may be achieved during 2004. Sweden has still problems in achieving a fruitful dialogue between forestry and environmental authorities and corresponding NGOs concerning forest policy issues (Svensson 2004). The entrenched position of the National Board of Forestry with its regional district organizations, together with principle of including forest related environmental issues in the general environmental policy, may be an impeding factor in the creation of a formal NFP in Sweden.

Finland has alone preserved direct public timber production investment subsidies during the 1990's. The NIPF-owners lobby has had incentives to support the NFP process that has promoted the continuation of these subsidies. These economic interests are missing in Norway and Sweden with respect to NFP process. It has been possible to achieve the immediate commercial interests related to sustainable forest management targets in general as well as in particular through forest certification. The aim to preserve regulated self-regulation, that has been true among the private forest owners lobby in the three Scandinavian countries for decades, remains a primary issue in NFP process (specification of regulated self regulation see Rayner & Howlett 2003).

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