

Policy Brief

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What shapes output of policy reform – forest policy implementation in Ghana

PhD thesis by Kirsten Carlsen

Policy and institutional factors are important underlying causes for deforestation, especially in the tropics. Forest policy reform is often promoted as a means to mitigate this. The output of many reform initiatives, however, deviate, at times substantially, from initial policy intentions. The arguments of political economy suggest that such policy failure is an intended outcome because it is in accordance with interests of political and bureaucratic elites. This is particularly prominent in resource rich states where state agents' interests in pursuing power and personal benefits are argued to be particularly prominent. The argument is, however, contested by a more pluralistic argumentation which suggests that though self-interests are important determinants for political and bureaucratic decisions; these decisions are also influenced by a number of contextual factors such as international leverage, bureaucratic resistance, public response and risk mitigation. With point of departure in forest policy reform in Ghana, the PhD thesis aims to contribute to this discussion by addressing the following overall question:

– Why do tropical forest policy reform outputs deviate, at time substantially, from initial intentions?

The thesis concludes that policy outputs deviate from initial intentions because politicians and bureaucrats have decided to implement adopted policies in ways that do not correspond with initial intentions. These decisions are from an overall perspective influenced by the pursuit of power and personal benefits of politicians and bureaucrats. In the case of politicians, these decisions are, however, also shaped by the level of bureaucratic support, concerns of political stability and international leverage. In terms of the bureaucrats responsible for policy implementation on the ground, signals from the political level, the level of discretion and public response are also prominent in shaping decisions. Apart from this, the thesis concludes that policy outputs deviate from initial intentions because donor-supported

forest policy reform tends not to take into consideration the actors, interests, resources, power structures and existing policies that influence policy output at the stages of implementation.

This overall conclusion is made on the basis of four empirical case studies of forest policy reform in Ghana. Each of the studies shed light on various aspects of policy outputs and the factors shaping them and they have been included in the thesis as four article manuscripts.

The first manuscript focuses on the implementation of a donor-supported policy reform prescribing the use of competitive bidding in timber right allocations. The study shows that in spite of the adopted policy reform, timber rights continue to be allocated in ways that enable policy elites to stay in power, bureaucrats to gain personal benefits (bribes), and economic elites to maintain exclusive access to raw material. In this way the study suggests that in spite of the strong influence of international agencies during the initial stages of agenda setting and policy formulation, political and bureaucratic pursuit of selfinterests appear to be prominent in shaping policy output during the stages of implementation.

The second manuscript explores outputs of the ban on chainsaw logging by assessing the total volume of sawn timber being traded domestically and the share of illegal chainsaw lumber in this. The paper estimates total domestic sales 1.4 mill m³ out of which 80% is illegal chainsaw lumber. The magnitude of illegal chainsaw lumber traded in the domestic markets suggests that bureaucrats face difficulties in enforcing the ban. This can partly be due to bureaucrats' pursuit of personal benefits, but may also be attributable to the risk of public unrest which could be a consequence if domestic market supplies were significantly reduced.

The third manuscript focuses on how certain narrative techniques shape the Ghana-EU FLEGT VPA policy process at the stages of implementation. The paper develops a typology of narrative techniques and illustrates how a particular use of narrative techniques means that some of the most important challenges to be VPA initiatives have not been taken into consideration at the stages of implementation. It also shows how bureaucrats'

decisions are partly influenced by signals from the political level that the VPA is not of high priority and partly by interests in minimising risk by engaging in coalitions with the saw millers.

The fourth paper assesses the factors affecting uptake of forest certification in Ghana. The paper shows how customer demands and prospects of market shares in environmentally sensitive, Western countries are important for certification uptake. It also shows how current (lack of) legal enforcement is an important barrier for certification uptake and thus explicates the complementary role of state-governance for certification uptake.