

Re Institution: The Open University

Unit of Assessment: C17 Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology

Title of case study: The impact of global environmental governance research on international forest policy discourse

1. Summary of the impact

The impact demonstrated in this case study is of Dr David Humphreys' research on the language and discourse used by key policy makers at the global level to frame, analyse and interpret international forest policy. His reconceptualisation of global environmental governance, with particular reference to the international politics of forestry governance through the development of the concept of the 'international forest regime', has had an impact on the attitudes, awareness and understanding of senior international forest policy makers with whom he has worked very closely, in particular within the International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO).

2. Underpinning research

Underpinning research on the international forest regime is rooted in a substantive reconceptualisation of environmental governance. *Forest Politics: The Evolution of International Cooperation* [3.6] played a pioneering role in providing the first systematic political analysis of the 'internationalisation' of forest issues, redefining forest politics in terms of competing ownership claims and disagreements on the causes of deforestation.

These arguments were taken forward by Humphreys (Senior Lecturer, 2001–present) in 1999 when 'he was instrumental in defining the concept of the international forest regime' (Buck, Executive Director, IUFRO). Humphreys' research questioned earlier analyses, whereby different international policy processes were treated as more or less isolated and free-standing, and argued that an international forest regime exists, comprising a range of interconnections between processes focused directly on forests and those only related to forests (such as agriculture and transport). He was

'one of the first researchers to demonstrate empirically the important role of civil society organisations, community voices and indigenous peoples in the formulation of policies. While most other political analysts looked at forest policy evolution in terms of the play of power between states, and block of states, and the interests of business and trade, Humphreys [3.1] explored how this dynamic has been reshaped and transformed by a third force in policy-making, civil society' (Dr Marcus Colchester, NGO Forest Peoples Programme).

Humphreys argued that a holistic analysis that includes these connections is necessary for forest policy to move beyond piecemeal, incremental progress.

Humphreys [3.5] suggested that earlier definitions of international regimes as intergovernmental entities structured around an international convention failed to capture the richness of forest governance. He professes that regimes are dynamic and interacting forms of governance that comprise hard international law (e.g. United Nations Convention on Climate Change), soft international law (e.g. United Nations Conference on Environment and Development Forest Principles) and private international law (e.g. Forest Stewardship Council's forest management principles).

Humphreys' view that, despite the absence of an international forests convention, a forest regime is evolving as a governance form that displays elements of both coherence and fragmentation is now commonly accepted by scholars and policy makers alike (for example, Giessen, 2013, 5.5; Rayner et al., 2010, 5.2). His innovative idea of an international forest regime has become a central tool for key policy makers to interpret the dynamics and complexities of global forest governance and it has provided the necessary language for constructive policy discussions.

Humphreys further examined the evolution of the regime in *Logjam: Deforestation and the Crisis of Global Governance* [3.4; research supported by The Open University]. *Logjam* won the International Studies Association 2008 Harold and Margaret Sprout Award for the best book on

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international environmental problems, the only time this prestigious award has been won by a scholar from a European country. His underpinning research on the forest regime has significantly influenced international forest policy makers, with an expert panel established specifically to analyse the regime (Rayner et al., 2010, **5.2**).

Humphreys [**3.3**, **3.2**] has extended the conceptual framework of *Logjam* to Avoided Deforestation, subsequently known as Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD) which, he argues, is driven by a neoliberal, rather than a conservationist, logic.

3. References to the research

1. Humphreys, D. (2009a) 'Environmental and ecological citizenship in civil society', *International Spectator*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 171–83. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03932720802693101>
2. Humphreys, D. (2009b) 'Discourse as ideology: Neoliberalism and the limits of international forest policy', *Forest Policy and Economics*, vol. 11, nos. 5–6, pp. 319–25. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.forpol.2008.08.008>
3. Humphreys, D. (2008) 'The politics of "Avoided Deforestation": historical context and contemporary issues', *International Forestry Review*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 433–42. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1505/ifor.10.3.433>
4. Humphreys, D. (2006) *Logjam: Deforestation and the Crisis of Global Governance*, London, Earthscan, 302pp. ISBN: 978-1-84407-301-6
5. Humphreys, D. (1999) 'The evolving forests regime', *Global Environmental Change*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 251–54. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0959-3780\(99\)00005-9](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0959-3780(99)00005-9)
6. Humphreys, D. (1996) *Forest Politics: The Evolution of International Cooperation*, London, Earthscan, 299pp. ISBN: 185383 3797

The journal articles are all published in peer-reviewed journals. The two monographs are highly significant pieces of work that were peer-reviewed prior to publication. They have been included in the appropriate Research Assessment Exercise submissions.

4. Details of the impact

Humphreys' most significant impact is on the awareness and understanding of international forest governance among key policy makers. His research has redefined how forest politics and forest policy is perceived by scholars and policy makers. This has led to invitations to work with a range of organisations that provide advice to policy makers, including the International Union of Forest Research Organisations [**5.6**, **5.7**, **5.8**], European Forest Institute (the leading forest research institute in Europe, with 25 member governments and 129 member organisations), and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF).

IUFRO has 700 government and non-governmental members and is a member of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, an interagency group created by the UN to support the UNFF. In 2009 Humphreys was one of 46 members of the IUFRO Global Forest Expert Panel on the international forest regime. In recognition of the importance of the concept that Humphreys had developed, the Panel used it in its own name: the IUFRO Global Forest Expert Panel on the International Forest Regime [**5.6**]. The concept was thus central to the Panel's mission and to its work.

The Panel provided a state-of-the-art research evaluation on forest governance to policy makers. Humphreys played a leading role as lead author of two chapters of the Panel's report (*Embracing Complexity: Meeting the Challenges of International Forest Governance*; **5.8**) and as contributing author of a further three. Text analysis reveals that seven of the eight chapters cited Humphreys' work, with 37 bracketed references covering 10 publications, spanning 14 years (1996–2009), more citations than any other author.

Humphreys' analytical work on the international forest regime [**3.4**, **3.5**] received prominence in the 'Introduction' to the report, which outlined the conceptual framework of the Panel's work [**5.8**]. He

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thus played a fundamental role in shaping the conceptualisations and vocabularies of the Panel. Since January 2011, when the report was launched, it has been viewed 6979 times with 6592 downloads (September 2013 figures), indicating significant global reach.

The secondary reach of Humphreys' conceptual work is evidenced by the fact that the report was mandated by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and therefore well-positioned to influence international policy dialogue about forests, particularly in the UN system [5.9]. Its key findings are reflected in the deliberations of the United Nations Forum on Forests and also the Convention on Biological Diversity. For instance, one of the major outcomes cited in media interviews by the lead editor of the report, Professor Jeremy Rayner, draws directly on Humphreys' research finding that forest-focused and forest-related policy must be considered holistically [5.3], a finding also taken up by organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

One of the impacts of the Panel was a commitment to 'problem-focused evolutionary learning'. In pursuit of this recommendation, in 2011 IUFRO established an interdisciplinary Task Force on International Forest Governance to explore the relationship between global and local forest governance. Humphreys was asked to join this task force with key responsibility for preparing an 'Issues and Options' paper on community forest management in Nepal. He has since served on a further IUFRO expert panel on biodiversity [5.6]. He contributed as a lead author to an IUFRO report on forests and society [5.7]. He has also served as a policy adviser on five UK delegations to the UNFF, most recently in 2009, with responsibility for shaping the UK position on forest policy instruments.

Humphreys was also appointed lead UK delegate for European Co-Operation in Science and Technology (COST) Action FP1207, Orchestrating Forest-related Policy Analysis in Europe, in 2013. This Action is based on the research on national forest programmes undertaken in COST E19 where Humphreys was also the lead UK delegate (1999–2003). Thus, Humphreys' impact on forest policy discourse in the current REF period needs to be understood as a cumulative and progressive process with growing impact that spans the UK, European and international levels.

Humphreys' ideas are now regularly referred to in key works on international forest policy [5.1; 5.2; 5.4; 5.5]. The impact of Humphreys' conceptual research on forest governance was acknowledged by Dr Marcus Colchester, director of the Forest Peoples Programme:

'Humphreys' influential writings have not only got policy-makers themselves to realise the relevance of this third force [civil society], but also to see the benefits. These are some of the main reasons Humphreys' services have been in demand with international organisations, who sought to revise their own approaches to forests to catch up with the trend that Humphreys early on identified.'

In conclusion, Humphreys has achieved demonstrable policy impacts by actively shaping the understanding, language and discourse of senior national, European and international forest policy makers and of civil society actors.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

1. Capistrano, D., Kanninen, M., Guariguata, M.R., Barr, C., Sunderland, T. and Raitzer, D. (2007) *Revitalizing the United Nations Forum on Forests: Critical Issues and Ways Forward*, Jakarta, Center for International Forestry Research. Available online at: http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/Books/BCapistrano0701.pdf.
2. Douglas, J. and Simula, M. (2012) *The Future of the World's Forests: Ideas vs Ideologies* (World Forests) (Volume 7), Berlin, Springer.
3. Doyle, A. (2011) 'U.N. climate plans said too narrow to save forests', *Reuters*, 23 January. Available at: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/01/24/us-climate-forests-idUSTRE70N00320110124>. The specific quote by Rayner (2011) is as follows: 'Our findings suggest that disregarding the impact of forests on sectors such as agriculture and energy will doom any new international efforts whose goal is to conserve forests and slow climate change'.
4. Giessen, L. (2013) 'Reviewing the main characteristics of the international forest regime

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complex and partial explanations for its fragmentation', *International Forest Review*, vol. 15, no. 1, pp. 60–70.

5. Lawlor, K., Olander, L., Boyd, W., Niles, J.O. and Myers Madeira, E. (2009) *Addressing the Causes of Tropical Deforestation: Lessons Learned and the Implications for International Forest Carbon Policy*, Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions Policy Brief, June. <http://nicholasinstitute.duke.edu/sites/default/files/publications/forestcarbonpb5-paper.pdf>.
6. McDermott, C.L., von Asselt, H., Streck, C., Assembe-Mvondo, S., Duchelle, A.E., Humphreys, D., Mulyani, M., Silori, C.S., Suzuki, R., Zelli, F., Frick, S., Lentini, M., Luintel, H. and Salimon, C. (2012) 'Governance for REDD+, forest management and biodiversity: existing approaches and future options' in Parrotta, J.A., Wildburger, C. and Mansourian, S. (eds) *Understanding Relationships between Biodiversity, Carbon, Forests and People: The Key to Achieving REDD+ Objectives*, A Global Assessment Report prepared by the Global Forest Expert Panel on Biodiversity, Forest Management and REDD+, IUFRO World Series Volume 31, Vienna, IUFRO, pp. 115–38. Available at: <http://www.iufro.org/science/gfep/biodiv-forman-redd-panel/report/>.
7. Mery, G., Katila, P., Galloway, G., Alfaro, R.I., Kanninen, M., Lobovikov, M. and Varjo, J. (eds) (2010) *Forests and Society: Responding to Global Drivers of Change*, IUFRO World Series 25, Report for the International Union of Forest Research Organizations, Vantaa, IUFRO/World Forests, Society and Environment. See particularly: Cashore, B., Galloway, G., Cabbage, F., Humphreys, D., Katila, P., Levin, K., Maryudi, A., McDermott, C. and McGinley, K. 'Ability of institutions to address new challenges', pp. 441–86, IUFRO World Series 25, IUFRO/World Forests, Society and Environment, Vantaa, Finland, 2010. Available at: <http://www.iufro.org/science/special/wfse/forests-society-global-drivers/>.
8. Rayner, J., Buck, A. and Katila, P. (eds) (2010) *Embracing Complexity: Meeting the Challenges of International Forest Governance*, A Global Assessment Report prepared by the Global Forest Expert Panel on the International Forest Regime, IUFRO World Series Volume 28, Vienna, IUFRO. Available at: <http://www.iufro.org/science/gfep/forest-regime-panel/report/>. See whole report but particularly where **David Humphreys** is
 - Lead author: Chapter 1 'Introduction' (pp. 9–18); Chapter 2 'Mapping the core actors and issues defining international forest governance' (pp. 19–36)
 - Contributing author: Chapter 3 'Core components of the international forest regime complex' (pp. 37–56); Chapter 5 'Forests and sustainability' (pp. 75–92); Chapter 7 'Examination of the influences of global forest governance arrangements at the domestic level' (pp. 111–36).
9. For links to coverage of Rayner et al. (2010) see <http://www.iufro.org/science/gfep/forest-regime-panel/report/>.
10. Individuals that can be contacted: Executive Director, International Union of Forest Research Organisations (influence on panel report). Adjunct Professor, Forest Resource Management Department (impact of Humphreys' work on international forest policy including within the United Nations Forum on Forests). Senior Policy Advisor, Forest Peoples Programme (the impact upon international civil society and on international organisations with a forest-related mandate). Senior Policy Advisor, IUCN - The World Conservation Union (impact on IUCN and on a range of civil society organisations working on forests with which IUCN collaborates). The Senior Policy Advisor at the Forest Peoples Programme has provided a statement that the work of Dr David Humphreys has been of great influence in the development of global forest policies as he was one of the first researchers to demonstrate empirically the important role of civil society organisations, community voices and indigenous peoples in the formulation of policies.