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Good Governance, Conditionality, and Learning?
Forest Policy Reform in Albania

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Good governance, conditionality, and learning? Forest policy reform in Albania

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"Good policies cannot be bought"[1]

Abstract

Forest resources in Albania are declining. The Albanian government and political institutions have however proven unable to reverse this process. This has prompted international organisations, most prominently the World Bank, to call for 'good governance', as a way in which the country should be governed. International assistance comes with certain conditions: The recipient country receives financial or practical assistance if certain standards of good governance defined by the international donors are met. The question arises how these conditionalities translate into political reforms. What is the rationale of compliance? Do reforms result from learning processes among the domestic actors, or are they a mere adaptation to external pressures?

The article reviews the current reforms in Albanian forest policy and management. Particular emphasis is on the impact of the international organisations on political reforms and the building of sustainable governance. We find that, as a result from the international injunction, both learning and adaptive behaviour occurs among the domestic actors. Decentralisation of

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forest management to the communities is at the core of the policy reform. The transfer of management responsibilities to the communities is conceived as a procedure to increase awareness and responsibility among the local actors. Like this, the preconditions for learning among the local actors are set. However, whether learning actually takes place or not, cannot be said in general. It depends on the already existing social and institutional structures at the local level. On the other hand, we find also adaptive behaviour resulting from the international conditionality. The standards defined by the international agencies and implemented at the local level are in many cases deployed strategically to advance given interests. This holds all the more true for the political elites at the national level. Albanian politicians have become increasingly prone to rely on international interventions, rather than to negotiate with one another. For them, decentralisation of forest governance might be a way to get of rid of the topic. Yet this does not necessarily contradict sustainable governance. Decentralisation can also be seen as a way to circumvent the political elites and to get other actors involved in decision-making processes. Our overall conclusion is that both learning and adaptation can contribute to good governance.

Key words: forest policy; Albania; good governance; learning; conditionality; decentralisation

1   Introduction

Albanian forests are in a very vulnerable condition. For more than 60 years, forest resources have been declining. A considerable loss already took place during the socialist era, mainly as a result of the government decision to clear forest for the creation of agriculture land. After the end of the socialist regime, Albania faces the challenge to adapt to the changes that occur from the political and economic transition. The country has undergone a fundamental transition since 1991, marked by changes in production structures, high unemployment, and

unprecedented emigration. The forest sector has suffered much more from this transition than other sectors. Today, forest degradation results from unregulated wood harvesting to satisfy household needs for fuel, timber and livestock fodder and to exploit new commercial opportunities in the domestic timber market. According to a recent study, the total potential of Albanian forest (under sustainable management) is 860,000 m³/year, with almost half of it (around 400,000 m³) is firewood. It is estimated that the needs for consumption of firewood is about 2,3 million m³/year, most of which coming from the forest nearby the villages (Kola and Zeneli, 2008, p. 2). For that reason, the areas close to rural communities have been particularly degraded. The situation demands urgent action to stall further loss of forests.

The Albanian government and political institutions have proven unable to reverse this process, however. As in many regions of the world where deforestation and degradation are at their highest, governance is weak and is an underlying cause of deforestation and degradation. This frequently brings international organisations, such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the European Development Fund, on the scene. The international organisations seek to propagate 'good governance', as a way in which a country should be governed. Good governance is associated with an efficient public service, an independent judiciary, with transparent decision-making and the respect for law and order (Smith, 2007). With the support of international donors, it is attempted to launch policy reforms to bring about, for example, sustainable management of natural resources.

In Albania, international organisations have been a crucial element in the transition process since the early 1990s. The lack of legitimacy and the unreliability of the government, state institutions and other domestic actors have increasingly amplified the importance of this level. As a result, the international community in Albania has been trying to "fulfil the role of honest broker and facilitator that the state institutions have been unable to perform" (Bogdani and Loughlin, 2007, p. 224). Most of the decisions in Albanian politics are taken with the

'blessing' of the international community. This pattern of patronage raises questions on the nexus of political reforms and policy learning that are at the centre of this article.

International assistance comes with certain conditions and development objectives. The recipient countries receive financial or practical assistance if they meet certain standards of good governance defined by the international donors. But how are conditionalities and compliance linked? How do conditionalities translate into political reforms in the recipient countries? In this article, we analyse the case of Albanian forest policy to study the impact of the international organisations on political reforms and the building of sustainability governance. Particular emphasis lies on the question how to conceptualise political reforms and, thus, the rationale of compliance: Do reforms result from learning processes among the domestic actors in recipient countries, or are they a mere adaptation to external pressures?

The article proceeds as follows: In the subsequent section, the theoretical framework of this study: the concepts of good governance, conditionality and learning, is established. Then the case study on Albanian forestry reform is presented. It is based on a review of existing literature as well as on interviews with forest actors in the country that the author conducted[2]. The third section outlines the good governance agenda, as put up in the Albania Forest Project, funded by the World Bank. The fourth section analyses the impact and developments in Albanian forest management at the local level and discusses obstacles to good governance in forestry. The concluding section discusses the relation between learning and adaptation and draws some implications for the design of good governance agendas.

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[2] 16 semi-structured interviews of normally 90 minutes. The interviewees were political actors (from the responsible ministries, administrative bodies, extension services, stakeholders, such as forest owners associations, and international organisations) or academics who work on forest topics. The interviews were conducted in March 2008.

2   Good governance and learning

This article takes a governance approach towards forest policy and management. In general, the term governance denotes a process of governing which departs from the traditional model where collectively binding decisions are taken by representatives within parliaments and implemented by a public administration. Governance is concerned with creating the conditions for ordered rule and collective action. Like this the outputs of governance do not differ from those of government. It is rather a matter of a difference in process: Governance refers to societal steering. It takes into account a change in actor constellations, both during formulation and implementation of policies, and is often characterised as a process of co-ordination within networks (Kooiman, 2003; Treib et al., 2007).

A particular usage of governance is the concept of 'good governance'. It has been stressed by the World Bank and other international organisations as a general guiding principle for development assistance (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1997; Rosenbaum and Shepherd, 2000). Good governance, in this sense, is a pre-condition to qualify for aid. Recipient countries are demanded to adhere to proper political and administrative processes in public decision-making. Political accountability, respect for human rights, the rule of law and often also the decentralisation of political power are the political attributes that normally appear on the governance agendas of many international assistance organisations.

The rise of the notion of good governance is associated with the recognition that development cannot occur unless the political conditions are right. Reforms of forest policies, for example, are unlikely to be successful when political elites act arbitrarily, when corruption is widespread, and when the interest of actors from outside the elite circles are excluded. Reforms are therefore not only required in the policy dimension. Good governance refers to constitutional, political and administrative changes as well. At the constitutional level, good

governance requires changes to fundamental principles and rules by which government is carried on. At the political level, good governance is frequently associated with political pluralism and participation, and with probity in the use of public powers. At the level of administration, good governance requires accountable public administration and transparent decision-making. All of these elements are prerequisite for the development of 'good' policy content (Smith, 2007).

By using the concept good governance donor organisations pass a judgement on the ways governments behave. What is more, the idea is to ultimately "transform what donors perceive as bad governance into good governance" (Doornbos, 2003, p. 11). The question arises how this transformation of governance is supposed to occur. How do conditionalities work? How and under which conditions do they translate into political and institutional change in the recipient countries? Generally speaking, conditionality can be defined as use of incentives to alter the behaviour or policies of the addressees. International assistance organisations normally offer monetary, technical or practical aid. In return, a government takes or promises to take certain policy actions. But how are the two elements linked?

The causal nexus between conditionality and national compliance has been subject to debate. Broadly speaking, we can distinguish two competing answers, one rationalist, based on an economic model of human/state behaviour, the other one constructivist, based on a more sociological model of human/state behaviour (Checkel, 2001, p. 553). The former argues that national actors will engage in cost-benefit calculations that should then lead to align domestic policy and practices with conditions set by the international community. The actors' interests and preferences are assumed to be fixed and not to be won over by international pressures. For the purpose of this article, we shall call this behaviour 'adaptation'. The latter model in contrast regards compliance as a matter of knowledge transfer and education on the part of international organisations. Instead of cost-benefit calculations national actors engage in puzzling, debating and arguing with international interlocutors over the scope and direction of

change. This way, compliance is based on a social ontology and may affect the interests and preferences of national actors. This behaviour, we call 'learning' (Checkel, 2000, pp. 4-5; Checkel, 2001, pp. 555-60).

In this article, we are particularly interested in the link between conditionality and compliance through learning. Of course, from real-world evidence, there are numerous examples that domestic actors are often calculating and acting strategically when seeking assistance from the international community (e.g. Haggard et al., 1993). On the other hand, we can argue that education and learning are especially important in countries with poor policy environments where strict conditionality often fails. In these cases, learning does not only involve the transfer of expertise but also the stimulation of dialogue among domestic actors (Checkel, 2000, p. 5). Political dialogue could then accelerate the transfer of new knowledge and learning. To be sure, compliance is also dependent on the nature of the political conditionalities defined by the aid organisations to be satisfied. They might range between coercion and cooperation (Smith, 2007, p. 15). However, a clear correlation between coercive strategies by the international donors leading to adaptive behaviour, and more cooperative conditionalities stimulating learning processes among the national actors does not exist. The following study of forest policy reform in Albania investigates under which conditions policy learning occurs and how good governance can be attained.

3 The good governance agenda: the Albania Forestry Project

Forests play an important role in Albania, both environmentally and economically. About one third of the country's surface (about 794,000 hectares) is forested. Of this, about 10 % (roughly 85,000 hectares) is classified as primary forest (FAO, 2005). During the socialist period, forest resources were already heavily exploited. Between 1959 and 1993, the decrease

of forest area has been 200,000 hectares, due to agricultural, but also industrial and demographic expansion (Naka et al., 2000, pp. 153-4). Forest depletion has continued since then, mainly because of persistent poverty in rural areas. Between 1990 and 2000, Albania lost an average of 2,000 hectares of forest per year, although the trend has come to a halt in recent years (FAO, 2005). The easing of the situation is mainly due to migration from the country to the cities and abroad and an increasing electrification in many rural areas – both developments alleviate the pressure on forests. Nevertheless, overuse of natural resources remains a serious problem.

Already in the early 1990s, the Albanian government approached the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for assistance to reverse forest degradation. Several studies stressed an urgency for forest policy reforms and suggested policy measures and investments in projects to support the transition of the forest sector to a market economy (FAO, 1992; Ruzicka, 1994). One result of these efforts was the Albania Forestry Project, undertaken by the World Bank.

3.1 World Bank project

In 1994, the World Bank has launched a project in Albania to support better resources management, monitoring and control. The Albania Forestry Project aims at achieving a sustainable increase in the productivity of forests and pastures and at empowering local governments (Proko, 2008, unpublished manuscript, pp. 16-17). The overriding objective of the project is poverty reduction, through improvement of forests in order to generate incomes from natural resources and employment.

Evaluation of the World Bank project revealed a positive impact on poverty alleviation. The communal forest and pasture management component in particular, with its targeted

interventions in rural areas, has contributed significantly to reducing poverty in vulnerable areas. The project supported the transfer of user rights to the communal level and assisted local communities to protect and manage natural resources in about one third of commune managed forest and pasture lands. Significant investments were made in that the project financed approximately 5,000 person years of local employment in order to implement the field interventions. In many cases, the local people are already deriving income from the use of forest and pastures that had been seriously degraded before. It is estimated that the budgets of households participating in project activities increased by an estimated 30 % per year. In addition, erosion caused by unsustainable land use was brought under control in areas where project intervention has taken place (World Bank, 2004, pp. 7, 11-12). These successes have set off broader policy reforms by the Albanian government to decentralise forest management tasks and responsibilities. Also, a follow-up forestry project was launched by the World Bank in 2004 (World Bank, 2005). The aim was to scale-up the community-based approach to forest and pasture management to all 218 communities in upland and mountainous erosion-prone lands.

A further objective of the 1994 World Bank project was to take initial steps in the transition of the forestry sector to a market economy. Yet this component turned out to be less successful. The privatisation of harvesting and wood processing enterprises proved difficult since the majority of private companies owned minimal and outdated equipment. Meanwhile, a system of issuing licenses to private companies undertaking activities in the sector of forests and pastures exist. Most of the licensed companies employ a small number of people and possess some equipment that used to belong to state forest harvesting enterprises. Additionally, the project was able to introduce a number of market-based mechanisms, such as wood-auctions (World Bank, 2004, p. 7). The largest challenge for the establishment of a market for forest products and work processes however is the substantial reduction of illegal logging activities.

For that reason, the decentralisation of forest management is regarded as the key to improve forest governance.

3.2   Forest policy reform in Albania

The World Bank projects triggered policy reforms and the adoption of new legislation in forestry and in other areas of natural resource management. The major piece of legislation to achieve sustainable management of the country's forest resources is the *Law on Forests and the Forest Police* from 2005, which aims at environmental conservation and the production of wood material and other forest products (Agalliu et al., 2007, p. 19). This act is an amendment of the 1992 Forest Law that has proven ill-suited for forest protection in many respects. According to the former law, for example, forest management plans did not consider biodiversity objectives. Another important piece of legislation, the *Law on the Protected Areas*, was passed already in 2002. It aims to regulate the protection, administration and sustainable management of protected areas. The law classifies theses areas into six categories of protected areas based on the IUCN categories. Special attention is paid to forests, waters and other natural resources within protected areas that are excluded from utilisation (Dida, 2003, pp. 4-7; Agalliu et al., 2007, p. 27).

Furthermore, the Albanian government designed a national strategy for the forest and pasture sector to fight the poor condition of forests (DGFP, 2005). The strategy is based on the Government Declaration from April 2003, on the future of Albania's forest and pasture sector. From this declaration, one can easily understand the situation of Albanian forestry and the need for improvement and rehabilitation. It states that the current level of resource exploitation and the minimal investment into the sector have left this resource base in a very vulnerable condition**.** "In the past, including even the transition years, forests have especially been estimated for their economic importance, by underestimating their multiple functional

aspect. Their harvesting does not lead to profits only but to losses as well […] as those of capabilities for future development which is a result of the degradation and desertification of forestry and pastoral environment" (DGFP, 2005, p. 13). The aim was therefore a sustainable and multifunctional development of forestry and pasture resources (DGFP, 2005, p. 7). The strategy outlines several priority objectives for the next ten years, including the halt of all commercial logging for a period of at least ten years; protection and rehabilitation of forests and pastures through the increase of investments and incentives of private and collective initiatives; and further attention to other socio-economic functions and services and the multiple use of forest and pasture (DGFP, 2005, pp. 14-15). One consequence of the strategy is the limited possibility for timber production. The Albanian forest economy will therefore not be able to contribute much to the development of the wood processing industry, at least for the next ten to 20 years. The restoration of the ecological functionality of the forests is given priority.

The most important political reform in the wake of the World Bank project, however, was the official decision to transfer the state forests and pastures to the local governments. Decentralisation is regarded as the new policy approach to sustainable forest management. The goal of the decentralization of forest and pasture management is twofold, to curb further degradation through the participation of local people in protection and sustainable development, and to increase the benefits to communities and villages from the management of these natural resources (Dida, 2003, pp. 12-14). The decentralization process includes the transfer of management responsibilities of forests and pastures in use to 218 communities and municipalities, accounting for 40 % of the Albanian forests. Until 2002, the transfer of forests and pastures already involved 56 communities. Management plans were worked out for all communities that received forests and pastures under their management. The transfer of forests and pastures to the rest of the communities, along with the development of management plans, was approved by the Council of Minister in February 2008.

So far, we only looked at the reform agenda. We shall now examine in how far the reform strategy changed the management practices and thus was successful to establish good governance in forestry.

4 Implementation of the policy reforms: towards good governance of forestry?

The World Bank Forestry Project in Albania has set off broader policy reforms in the forest sector. In the following section, decentralisation and devolution of user rights and management responsibilities of forests and pastures from the State to local communities will be reviewed. We will also examine the broader political and institutional environment in which the reforms take place. The difficult governance situation at the national level and the 'co-governing' role of the organisations at the international level are the decisive factors that shape the implementation of the good governance agenda.

4.1 Forest management at the local level

Approximately 50 % of the Albanian population live in rural areas, and this fact has created strong relations between the local communities and forests. For long, forests have been the main source of community employment and incomes. At the same time, however, this has put great pressure on forests. Degradation results from overuse of forest resources to satisfy the needs for fuel, timber and livestock fodder of the local population. As a result, the forests around rural communities are particularly degraded.

Before 1992, during the communist regime, all Albanian forests and pastures were state property. The restitution to previous owners began in 1996. In 2001, 81 % of the forest land was state-owned, 18 % was community-owned, and only 1 % was in private ownership (Dida,

2003, p. 13-14). This way, the Albanian situation differs significantly from the ownership structures in other countries of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, which reveal much higher proportions of private-owned forests after the restitution process (LeMaster and Owubah, 2000, pp. 32-33). In Albania, the concept of land ownership played traditionally only a minor role. Forests and pastures were normally used on the basis of common law, i.e. the user rights were with the families and were inherited over generations. The local people could log and benefit from the natural resources according to their needs. On the other hand, this constituted also an obligation for local forest users to exploit the forest resources in a sustainable way, and provisions for communal supervision existed. This is also the reason why the communities played such an important role in Albanian forest management (Carçani 1994, p. 11; Proko, 2008, unpublished manuscript, pp. 2-9). The government decision to decentralise forest management to the local level could therefore be seen as continuation of this traditional approach to forestry.

In the literature, decentralisation is regularly cited as an important element of good governance (e.g. Smith, 2007, ch. 5; Grindle, 2007). It is argued that 'down-scaling' of political decisions will result in better quality policies, with more sustainable outcomes. The rationale behind this is that more stakeholders who are locally affected can participate in policy formulation. The same holds true for Albanian forestry: the transfer of forest management to the communities is conceived as a procedure to increase awareness and responsibility among the local actors. Community boards have been installed, composed of representatives of the local government, stakeholders (user associations, local people), and the forest service. They collectively deal with the formulation of management plans and make the necessary decisions. The World Bank, as the international donor organisation, accompanies the transfer process. It is not unlikely that, in these settings, learning towards sustainable resource management will develop among the involved actors. Yet decentralisation and participation are no guarantee for learning. They might also produce counter-productive

results, such as lip services and the establishment of pseudo-organisations to give the false impression of active local involvement. This type of adaptive behaviour towards donor-defined standards will presumably not result in more sustainable outcomes.

One obstacle to social learning is the lack of a developed participation culture in Albania. As legacy of the communist period, policies and projects are formulated and enforced in a top-down manner, without active participation of local people and institutions (Naka et al., 2000, pp. 157-58; Prifti and Hasko, 2003, p. 248);. This is typical of many post-socialist countries in Eastern and Southeastern Europe where local actors were not encouraged to take initiative and to make decisions, but were suppressed by orders and control (Herbst, 2002, p. 108). For that reason NGOs, such as the Netherlands Development Organisation SNV, are involved in the decentralisation process of Albanian forestry as well to support capacity building at the local level. They try to establish new participatory approaches through operating procedures that provide for consultation, public hearings, and time for affected people to evaluate policies and express their opinions. The crucial task however is to link these new procedures to former traditions of communal decision-making. In many villages the traditional clan structures have survived the communist era and are even more alive today given the poor governance situation at the national level. Establishing new structures of decentralised governance will be much easier if a link is made with existing community structures.

At this point, the transfer process is underway, with still many unresolved questions. Considerable debate is going on in Albania about how far the devolution process should go. Is the transfer of user rights to the communities, which then deal with the allocation of rights and duties, the best way to secure sustainable management? Or should property rights also be given to the communities and eventually to the local people? It is argued that private ownership is the best way to increase the individual interest in natural resources management and to stimulate sustainable income generation. Others however argue that private ownership leads to a fragmentation of forests that contradicts sustainable management. Therefore, as is

argued, collective ownership at community level with individually granted user rights is the better alternative. From the perspective of linking up with historically evolved structures, we can add that learning and capacity-building at the local level are more likely to occur in settings which are based on already existing practices in the communities, i.e. user rights-based approaches. The general argument that the introduction of property titles would almost automatically imply responsibility and sustainable management (cf. Mekouar and Castelein, 2002, pp. 8-14) might be too simplistic.

4.2   Challenges to good governance at the national level

When discussing the opportunities and challenges of decentralised forest governance, it should not be overlooked that the current reforms of the forest sector take place in a larger political and institutional setting. At present, the Albanian forest administration is going through a major reform process. The Directorate General of Forests and Pastures (DGFP), which has been renamed as Directorate of Forest Policy (DGF) only recently, is the institution in charge of the management and development of the forest sector. The directorate was under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food until late 2007, but was then put under direct control of the Minister of Environment, Forest and Water Administration. The Environment Ministry was founded only in 2001 and, since then, has been undergoing steady reforms (Dida, 2003, p. 12). Generally speaking, the administration is in a state of flux because of constant reorganisation. This further adds to flawed governance of the forest sector.

The weak political environment in Albania has increasingly amplified the importance of the international level in domestic politics. The forest sector reforms were only possible with the support of international donor organisations, in particular the World Bank. This has already become a common feature in Albanian politics. Since the 1990s, the country has grown ever

more dependent on international mediation and arbitration. The international judgement has been brought to bear on important domestic issues, as domestic actors seem increasingly incapable of finding common ground (Bogdani and Loughlin, 2007, p. 225). As a result, legitimacy in Albania now lies with the international community. As one commentator argues, "it has created a vicious circle of dependency culture, both economic and political" (Kajsiu et al., 2002, p. 7).

Albanian politicians have become increasingly prone to rely on international interventions, rather than to negotiate with one another. They devote time and effort to winning the sympathies of the international donors. This way, the World Bank project and the policy reforms in forestry bring about adaptive strategies among many of the involved national actors rather than learning processes, and lead to an opportunistic attitude vis-à-vis the international donors rather than to changes of political ideas and concepts in forestry. Many political actors seemingly feel very convenient in going 'multilateral', by accepting the World Bank's lead and conditions. They may find this situation convenient since it relieves them from political accountability. As some of our interview partners articulated, decentralisation of forest management responsibilities is an attempt of the officials to get rid of the topic.

Decentralisation of political responsibilities might on the other hand be a way to circumvent the political elites and to get other – local – actors involved in decision-making processes. Again, this raises the issue of learning. The crucial question remains whether it will be possible to establish local governance to manage the community forests and pastures. The potential for learning processes among the local government and stakeholders exists.

5 Conclusion

Albania's forest resources are declining at an alarming rate. At the same time, the state of the forests is closely linked with the socio-economic well-being of the Albanian people.

Sustainable governance of forest resources is hence needed for environmental as well as economic and social reasons. Therefore, and also under pressure of international political and donor organisations, the Albanian government was urged to take action to halt forest degradation. The article reviewed the current reforms in forest policy and management. Particular emphasis was on the impact of the international organisations on political reforms and the building of sustainable governance. We analysed the impact of 'good governance' as political conditionality set by the donor organisations. Albania received financial and practical assistance and, in return, was expected to meet the internationally defined standards of good governance. The question was whether this mechanism brings about learning towards sustainable management of natural resources among the domestic actors.

Given the difficult governance conditions at the national level, the moves to decentralise forest management seem as a promising strategy that serves a twofold aim: to protect the forest ecosystems, and to enhance the economic prospects and living standards of the people. The crucial task is to create commitment among the local governments and stakeholders to manage the forests in their community in a sustainable way. The idea behind this strategy is to make forest policy more responsive to local needs. It is claimed that decentralisation will help the local population by positioning power at a level where they have a chance of capturing it, or at least making it more responsive to their needs and interests. Like this, the preconditions for learning among the local actors are set. However, whether learning actually takes place or not, cannot be said in general. It depends on the case, and on the particular circumstances. The local power structures, for example, are an important factor that can inhibit learning processes when participation remains limited to the level of elites within particular localities. Also, some localities have better planning capacities than others and thus different preconditions for learning (Doornbos, 2003, p. 12). Along these lines, existing social and institutional structures should figure as points of departure in the respective governance designs. This also applies to the type of solutions discussed in the transfer of forest management to the communities. User

rights-based approaches might be more suitable instruments than property rights in communal forest management since the former rely on existing governance traditions. On the whole, success or failure of the process to build good governance depends on the capacities for sustainable forest management that are built on the local level. Learning processes cannot be forced – but they are becoming more likely to evolve within 'good' structures.

This rather optimistic finding on possible learning among the local actors should not imply that there is no strategic or adaptive behaviour. The standards defined by the international agencies and implemented at the local level might in many cases be deployed strategically to advance given interests, or to manipulate or constrain the views of other actors. Donors and observers recount many examples of lip service and willy-nilly implementation. This holds all the more true for the political elites at the national level. As a rule, they do not internalise the norms given by the international agencies, these norms merely constrain their behaviour (Checkel, 2001, p. 557). From this, we infer that conditionalities can bring about both adaptive behaviour and learning outcomes at the same time. Conversely, both instrumental use of norms and norms providing actors with new understandings of interest and identity can result in compliance with given norms. From a strategic viewpoint, we therefore suggest to combine both approaches to compliance to be successful.

The idea of good governance and posing political conditionalities sounds easier in theory than it turns out in practice. Not surprisingly, in many countries implementation of various donor-instigated political reforms is rather poor. Conditionality fares particularly badly in national contexts marked by poor policy environments. Also, introducing policy conditionalities often means inserting new elements into highly complex arrangements and processes, leading to new complexities. In the process, donor organisations run the risk of becoming increasingly tangled up in the domestic policy processes of recipient countries. In any case, all available options to foster good governance, be it through learning or adaptation, should be exploited.

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