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Two decades of national and international forest biodiversity policies in Bangladesh-Analysing resulting power dynamins among public agencies and their implications

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Introduction

The formulation and effective implementation of policies, e.g. on biodiversity, requires strong public agencies in charge of them. In turn, assigning responsibilities for a specific policy and the associated policy tasks to a particular agency adds to the administrative instruments it has at hand and its equipment with power. In political research, the influence international actors and institutions may have on domestic (biodiversity) policies is a fruitful and ongoing research programme (Bernstein and Cashore 2012, Aurenhammer 2013). This research programme so far, however, underestimates the importance of national-level issue-specific administrative bodies, such as environment, forestry, agriculture or finance ministries and agencies. It is them who are the key to the domestic policymaking processes and who formulate domestic policy, guide its implementation and, consequently, may create effects on the ground. Consequently, in the broad field of biodiversity policy they compete by attracting international allies (e.g. from development cooperation and related project funds) and by formulating their own domestic biodiversity policies. Through these processes, different competing national public bureaucracies use donor and domestic biodiversity policies to acquire new tasks for their organisations and, in doing this, they further their interests and increase their power. This distribution of power due to the acquisition of biodiversity policy tasks for an organisation and changes in power distribution over time are crucial factors setting the limitations and possibilities for biodiversity policy in a specific country.

Power is an important research topic in biodiversity policy studies (e.g., Schusser 2013). The study of the power dynamics of public bureaucracies related to forest biodiversity in Bangladesh is a relatively untouched research area. As a developing country, the forest biological resources of Bangladesh are under serious threat of degradation but Bangladesh is committed to conserving the biological resources as the country is a party to the relevant international agreements (e.g., CBD, CITES, UNFCCC, UNFF, UNCED etc.) (Rahman and Giessen 2014). In addition, this is a prerequisite for further in-depth studies on the power of the main actors in various land-use issues in Bangladesh. Hence, this paper aims to analyse the effects of international and domestic forest-related biodiversity policies on the power of the main domestic and foreign donor bureaucracies in Bangladesh. Such analysis will provide knowledge about the power equipment of the multiple competing bureaucracies on forest-biodiversity issues, which is crucial for identifying potent partners for any biodiversity policy that wants to be effective.

Materials and methods

Analytical concepts: The paper uses the following three concepts/theory as an analytical framework: First, *power theory*: We adopted Krott's (Krott et al. 2014) actor-centred power approach and his three categories of power elements, 'coercion (CR)', '(dis-)incentives (IC)' and 'dominant information (DI)' for analysing the power position of state bureaucracies in Bangladesh. Second, *Bureaucratic politics to increase organisational power*: The bureaucracy may be a state actor, a domestic

actor or a foreign actor. Bureaucracies may compete with one another for resources, political domains and influence (Allison 1971, Peters 2010). Hence, bureaucratic politics reveal the struggle for power among relevant state institutions in a given issue area of global forest politics (Allison 1971). Third, *Policies and policy process*: Policies as well as projects are planned action adopted or proposed by an organisation or individual intended to address a problem (Howlett et al. 2003). Forest policies are defined as: i) forest-focused policies (formally and explicitly addressing forests as a primary issue), ii) forest-related policies (as a secondary issue), or iii) forest-relevant policies (not addressing forests formally and explicitly, but having empirical relevance for forests on the ground). The research considers forest-focused and forest-related biodiversity policies. A rational process of policy consists of three cycles: policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy evaluation and monitoring, (see details in Krott 2005). Every policy establishes certain tasks at different stages of the policy cycles and assigns them to a specific actor (i.e., bureaucracy) to take on responsibility for it. Here it is referred to as strategic tasks, which correspond with what Schusser (2013) and Krott (Krott et al. 2014) call power features.

Analytical approach: A mixed qualitative-quantitative research technique was employed for this study. The research follows the path of a full quantitative survey of all policies and projects relating to forest biodiversity in Bangladesh from 1992-2013 and a qualitative assessment of strategic tasks assigned. The policy and project were carefully chosen based on forest policy definitions and the CBD Programmes of Work (CBD 2015). All policy documents were collected from the Bangladesh Forest Administration’s library, the Department of Environment’s library and personal communication within the expert circle and administrative staff of respective agencies, for example, the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF), the Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD), the Department of Environment (DoE), the Planning Commission (PC) etc. in February and March 2014. In addition, all government projects related to forest biodiversity were collected from the reporting documents of the MoEF and the ADP (Annual Development Programs) documents of the PC library during February-March and December 2014. Moreover, websites of important state agencies (e.g. MoEF, BFD, DoE etc.) and donors (e.g. UNDP, ADB, World Bank etc.) were searched to collect the relevant policy and project data. Accordingly, we find a total of 102 policies. Each policy was analysed employing a qualitative content analysis method and the strategic tasks were identified, as were power elements resulting from these tasks, the assigned bureaucracy connected to the task and the policy year (cf. Wibowo and Giessen 2015), which we analysed further using ‘Microsoft Excel’ and ‘R’ software.

Results and discussion

A total of 102 policies (58 Government of Bangladesh-funded, 44 foreign donor-funded) and 1295 strategic tasks were identified on forest biodiversity issues in Bangladesh during 1992–2013. These policies, and in particular the strategic tasks mentioned in them, were used as the main unit of analysis for this research.

Power elements among domestic bureaucracies and foreign donors

Table 1 Comparison of power elements among domestic bureaucracies and foreign donors

Organisation	Total Task	% of Total Task	Dominant Information (DI)		Incentives (IC)		Coercion (CR)	
			No. of Task	(%)	No. of Task	(%)	No. of Task	(%)
Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF)	325	25.10	141	10.89	49	3.78	135	10.42
Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD)	313	24.17	144	11.12	147	11.35	22	1.70
Department of Environment (DoE)	115	8.88	57	4.40	43	3.32	15	1.16
Planning Commission (PC)	170	13.13	61	4.71	5	0.39	104	8.03
Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED)	59	4.56	59	4.56	0	0.00	0	0.00
Finance Division (FD)	93	7.18	3	0.23	6	0.46	84	6.49
Economic Relations Division (ERD)	65	5.02	33	2.55	2	0.15	30	2.32
Bangladesh Forest Research Institute (BFRI)	22	1.70	9	0.69	13	1.00	0	0.00
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	36	2.78	13	1.00	22	1.70	1	0.08
Asian Development Bank (ADB)	21	1.62	8	0.62	12	0.93	1	0.08
World Bank (WB)	19	1.47	11	0.85	7	0.54	1	0.08
Food and Agriculture Organization of the	9	0.69	4	0.31	5	0.39	0	0.00

United Nations (FAO)								
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	17	1.31	11	0.85	6	0.46	0	0.00
German Federal Enterprise for International Cooperation (GIZ)	7	0.54	2	0.17	5	0.39	0	0.00
Global Environment Facility (GEF)	12	0.93	0	0.00	12	0.93	0	0.00
International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)	12	0.93	4	0.31	8	0.62	0	0.00
Total	1295	100.00	560	43.24	342	26.41	393	30.35

The analysis states that the MoEF holds the highest share of tasks, slightly higher than the BFD, followed by the PC, DoE, FD, IMED, ERD and BFRI respectively. In terms of power elements related to DI, the BFD ranks slightly higher than the MoEF and far higher than the PC, IMED and DoE. The BFD has more IC power than the MoEF and DoE. The greater proportion of CR power is shared by the MoEF, PC and FD respectively. However, for foreign donors, the UNDP ranks highest, followed by the ADB, WB, USAID, GEF, IUCN, FAO and GIZ respectively. The DI power is significant for the UNDP, USAID, WB and ADB respectively. For IC power, the UNDP, ADB and GEF contribute more followed by the IUCN, WB, USAID, GIZ and FAO respectively. CR power is applied rarely and only by the WB, UNDP and ADB.

The DI of the MoEF is associated with the guidance and monitoring of policy tasks. However, for the BFD and DoE, it is linked mostly with preparation of draft policies, scientific management and monitoring of tasks. The MoEF applies CR power mainly through approving policy documents and funding allocations. The IC power of the BFD and DoE is linked primarily with implementation arrangements for biodiversity conservation and management. Additionally, the IMED and the ERD mostly hold DI power; this could be because the IMED is primarily involved with monitoring and evaluation of tasks and the ERD mainly deals with funding negotiations with the donors. However, the PC and FD chiefly utilise CR power, essentially through approval of project documents and funding allocations. Donors' provision of financial and technical incentives is what constitutes their IC power; they offer expert assistance to draft policy preparation, which is their DI. They are even associated slightly with approval of policies and funds, and sanctions, which is counted as CR.

There is, perhaps, a shortage of empirical evidence on power analysis of actors in forest biodiversity issues. However, comparative results were found on community forestry for developing countries (Schusser 2013), where the forest-related bureaucracies gain a high level of power not only in CR but also IC and DI. The research finds the dismal research condition of a governmental research institute (BFRI) holding very limited power (similar Aurenhammer 2013).

Variation of power elements over time and policy mixes

The analysis identifies variation of tasks and resulting power elements of different bureaucracies over time. These distinctions of tasks could be linked to policy mixes/policy instruments depending on the power elements involved. Policy mixes – a bundle of techniques – are applied to attempt to change society's behaviour through attaining a policy outcome (Ewart 1998, Krott 2005). Furthermore, Etzioni (1975) classifies the policy mixes as regulation, financial means and information (cited Sadath and Krott 2012). This research recognises these policy mixes may vary depending on the policy issue. For example, for domestic bureaucracies, the information policy instruments was prominent in 1993–1995, 1999–2005 and 2007–2013; the financial instruments was marked in 1992–1995 and 2011–2013 and the regulatory policy instruments was observed noticeably in 1997–2001 and 2006–2008. Here, forest biodiversity policy issues are scrutinised but for sustainable forest management or climate change or community-based forestry policy issues, the resulting policy mixes may differ, an issue which requires further study in the future.

Power dynamics among domestic and foreign donor bureaucracies

The analysis displays an inconstant trend of power elements among responsible bureaucracies over the years. For example, in terms of power related to DI, the MoEF gained power prominently in 2009–2012 but lost it in 2001–2005. Similarly, UNDP gained the DI power in 1995, 2007 and 2009, and lost it in 2010–2011. The results indicate that among domestic actors, primarily the line ministries (MoEF) and subordinated department (BFD) gained power. But other central cross-cutting financial, planning and monitoring bureaucracies (e.g., Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Planning) hold influential power position. A previous study for Indonesia contradicts the results that the national forest bureaucracies have been losing power due to the influence of national and international forestry programmes (Wibowo and Giessen 2015). The development agencies were found to be important actors in funding conservation

activities especially in developing countries (Salam and Noguchi 2006). According to Aurenhammer (2013), in forest development cooperation policy, governmental actors of both donor and recipient countries most frequently hold the influential roles and figure as a strong potential for change. This is particularly surprising where foreign donors hold CR power that may arouse a country's concerns over its national sovereignty. Further in-depth studies linking the CR power of foreign donors with countries' sovereignty and the means of shaping and practising this power would be worthwhile. The research also identifies the potential conflict of interest among the bureaucracies and this may create a scope for further in-depth research into how these power elements could produce a conflict of interest in the biodiversity sector.

Conclusions and outlook

It is up to the powerful actors identified (e.g., the MoEF, BFD, PC, UNDP, ADB, WB) to set the limits and directions of domestic forest biodiversity policies in a country. Now, any actor who is interested in playing a part in this issue may choose the requisite bureaucracy based on these power features, may form coalitions and maintain or even increase formal organisational interests and informal preferences. This research unveils how domestic and foreign bureaucracies perform their tasks at national policy level on an international issue that may induce the policymaker to recommend distributing or redistributing tasks among the bureaucracies to implement the issue successfully. This research, for the first time, develops a forest biodiversity policy and project database over the period 1992–2013, which will guide policymakers and researchers in identifying currently powerful actors, designing policies with them and setting the direction of further in-depth studies with powerful individual bureaucracies in Bangladesh. As this power analysis is a new arena for Bangladesh conservation policy research, further studies on the power analysis of actors associated with implementation at field level are recommended. The methodology developed based on this power theory could be usefully applied to other international issues (e.g., sustainable forest management, climate change etc.) and even comparative studies with other countries on various land use issues.

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