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EVER CLOSER FOREST POLICY?

A qualitative document study on European
Integration

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Abstract

This thesis work examines integration in the EU on forest policy, aiming to understand what drives the integration process on the area. The study is centred on analysing the differences between the first and second forestry strategy and on how Council of the European Union and the European Parliament relate to these. Previous research disagreed on how the policy area might develop, split between projections of increased supranationalism or rather coordination. The study contrasts the two integration theories Neofunctionalism and New Intergovernmentalism to analyse the material. The method employed is a qualitative document analysis. The results of this work find no discernible signs of increasing supranationalism, on the contrary all actors clearly state that forests and forestry is a national competence and should remain so. The results also found that the roles of the legislative solutions shifted dramatically between the first and second strategy. The Parliament was instrumental in pushing the Commission to adopt the first strategy. Meanwhile they were left out of the process of drafting the second strategy, only able to comment after it was already in implementation. The Council seems to have solidified control of the policy area, able to wield strong influence in the shaping of the second strategy.

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1. Introduction

Forests as landscapes and ecosystems provide both economic and environmental benefits. The transition towards a more sustainable society ought to actualize the importance several of these goods, forests are a natural carbon sink, a source of bioenergy as well as renewable building materials. As ecosystems forests are also key for biodiversity (Aggestam & Pülzl, 2018). Based on this, one might assume that policy relating to forests and forestry will be a relevant topic going forward. Forest policy is not a formal competence of the EU, yet the union has for a long time been engaged in forests both directly and indirectly. This makes it an interesting policy area to analyse and study. The European Green Deal (The Von der Leyen Commission's environmental policy package that headlined the new commission's first months) mentions forests in several aspects and stakes out the path for a new EU Forest Strategy to be implemented in 2021 (European Parliament, 2020). In anticipation of this, delving into past developments of integration on this area are useful to understand the future process.

Previous research on European forest policy has painted a detailed picture of its emergence over time. However, studies on the area that focuses on the process of integration on the area are scarce. The studies that try to project its development are conflicting. Andersson (2007) and Bjärstig (2013), both studies rooted in neofunctionalist theory, claim that supranational integration is likely and project that forest policy might become included as a formal competence at some level. Meanwhile Edwards and Kleinschmit (2013) refute this, claiming that member states are most unwilling to cede authority. Instead suggesting that non-binding coordination is more likely. Theoretical perspectives on integration other than Neofunctionalism are lacking. The aim of this thesis work is to bring clarity into these differing perspectives and deepen understanding of the integration process on this area. The specific question of the study is: Who and what is driving integration in the forest policy area?

The study's analytical framework is based on European integration theory, which aims to explain why countries coordinate (or why they might not). Using both Neofunctionalism and New Intergovernmentalism, with the aim of bringing two contrasting perspectives into the analysis. In Neofunctionalism there's an innate belief that supranational integration is likely to increase over time, pushed onwards by spillover effects. New Intergovernmentalism on the other hand view integration as more controlled by states. With states being considered wary of transferring power to a supranational level, coordinative measures are seen as the most likely form of integration.

The method is a qualitative document study, with a process tracing approach. The study is performed by analysing the original forestry strategy from 1998 and the new one from 2014 to assess changes over time. Equally important are the documents associated with the new Forest Strategy, as they offer insight into the process of drafting the strategy and the intentions of the various actors involved. The theories are employed to construct two sets of expectations on these documents and to create explanatory models in the analysis. The results of the study find no shifts towards a more supranational forest policy, rather the strategy relies on coordination. It is also found that the Council (and in extension the member states) seem to be fully in control of the process of shaping the new Forest Strategy, indicating a shift from the first strategy in 1998 when the European Parliament very much instigated the inception of the strategy. The Parliament is now reduced to a secondary role, while the Commission seems to primarily adapt itself to the will of the member states.

The first chapter is on previous research. It's divided into two sections, the first on the historical emergence of the EUs role in forest related issues, the second section discusses the more recent research on integration of EU forest policies. Then aim and the specific research questions are presented. Afterwards the theories used in this work are presented in detail. Subsequently is the material and method section, where the material used is discussed before the method and the theoretical expectations are discussed. In the results section the findings from the material are presented as well as analysed. In the final section, the conclusions and implications of the findings are discussed.

2. Previous research

This chapter is split into three parts. The first part discusses research on the development of forest policy within the EU. The second sector describes more recent research on where the policy areas is headed now. The final chapter addresses the identified research gap in the previous research.

2.1 The Emergence and Development of EU Forest Policy

Andersson (2007) describes the historical emergence of forest policy within the EU. It is not mentioned in the Treaty of Rome (EEC Treaty). Yet the Directorate Generale of Agriculture in a limited manner handled issues related to forests and after some time funding was allocated to forest related ends. In 1974 a proposal on a directive on common EU forest policy was rejected by the Council. Related proposals were rejected by the Council in both 1978 and 1983. In 1986 a new proposal was this time rejected by the European Parliament.

Andersson (2007) then describes how the EUs fourth enlargement in 1995 once more actualized the topic of EU forest policy. All the countries joining in 1995; Sweden, Finland and Austria, had substantial forested areas and economically significant forestry industries. The European Parliament started to probe the possibilities of EU forestry policy. There was significant support among several member states (MS) for a truly common forestry policy. However, amid fears from other sectors that the inclusion of forestry would diverge attention and funding from their own sectors combined with disinterest from the new coming MS's, this turned out to be a dead end. In 1996 the so-called Thomas report from the parliament proposed that the EU establish a forest strategy. Ultimately in 1998, the Commission enacted a non-binding Forest Strategy. Note that strategies are enacted directly by the Commission, as such strategies are not subject to the normal EU legislative procedures.

Besides the Forestry Strategy (and its novel edition in 2014) the sole other document related specifically to forests is the Forest Action Plan from 2006 to 2011. It too is non-binding and based on voluntary cooperation. It is thought to have had very little effect on coordinating EU policy except by accommodating information sharing (Winkel et al, 2013).

Outside of these two initiatives there's a whole host of legislation affecting forests more indirectly. Winkel et al (2013) list these policy areas. Through the CAPs (Common Agricultural Policy) rural development (More correctly named European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development) various forestry projects are funded. Environmental policy in the form of policies on conservation, biodiversity and various environmental protections. Climate change policy primarily through land use policy which aims to address carbon emissions and storage. Energy Policy since forests are a key source of renewable energy. Lastly also trade and industry policy.

To summarize we can see that there historically have been several efforts to create a common EU forest policy, yet all have failed. Nonetheless, over time there has been a growing number of policies rooted in other competences that effect forests. As far as documents that cover specifically forests and forestry the Forest Strategy is the sole one, which is nonbinding in nature and enacted by the Commission, is the sole one.

2.2 Explaining Integration in the Forestry Area: Heading Towards Supranationalism or Coordination?

This second part delves into the research on how the forest policy area is developing within the EU and how integration on the area is understood. It finds conflicting images, with one side presenting the idea that forest policy is likely to become a formalized competence and thus receiving a more supranational nature. Supranational meaning in this context to delegate national authority to the European Union. The contrasting image is one of EU member states reluctant to cede any authority on forest issues to the EU, instead keener on collective coordination.

Andersson (2007) research on events after the enactment of the Forestry Strategy in 1998 seems to suggest that further integration is plausible. Through an analysis of EU documents (Action Plans and Council statements, among others) the study interprets there to be a demand for further formalization of EU forest policy from member states and other actors as well. She has also conducted a questionnaire sent to representatives from forest authorities in each member state. A plurality of respondents (one of from each member state) express a desire for a common EU forest policy, which the study interprets as a shift in attitudes since the negotiations concerning the first forestry strategy. She also interviewed Swedish non-government actors in the forest arena, both industry and environmental organisations. Amongst them a majority in favour of formalized EU forest policy was found. In conclusion the study argues that there is a shift among various actors (especially among what is termed as forest elites) towards supporting some form of EU competence on forest policy. It is argued that this is a result of institutionalisation among forest actors who find themselves partially forced by increasing EU authority on the area to get the area formalized to be able to influence the policy area.

Building on Andersson (2007), Bjärstig (2012) interviewed actors in the Swedish forest sector to gauge their attitudes towards formalized integration of EU forest policy. The results find that the sector at large is positive towards such an integration, having confidence that they could

steer its development. Basing her study on Neofunctionalism, Bjärstig characterizes her findings as a sort of functional spillover in action. Hypothesising that previous EU decisions have forced actors to accept increased EU authority as a path to increase their own influence on the area. Further she argues that from a neofunctionalist perspective NGOs are likely to successfully create broader support for formalized EU forest policy by influencing policymakers.

In “Towards a European forest policy - Conflicting courses“, Edwards and Kleinschmit (2013) discusses concurrent processes towards developing European forest policy. Some of them occurring outside the framework of the EU. A rivalling process is one through Forest Europe, an organization gathering 46 European countries. They analysed both public documents and interviewed government representatives in several EU member states. In contrast to Andersson (2007) they found that a majority of member states were worried about increased EU authority on the sector while a much smaller number welcomed more EU initiatives. Due to the strong desire among several actors for forests to remain a national competence, they foresee a higher likelihood for non-binding coordination rather than increased supranationalism. Possibly, they argue, this could even occur outside of the frame of the EU through Forest Europe.

Aggestam & Pülzl (2018) have dissected how well the Forest Strategy from 2014 is integrated with other policy areas that directly affect forests. They carried out their analysis by grouping all policy documents and instruments in the EU relating to forests into different policy areas before analysing how well the objectives of the various areas matched with the Forest Strategy. They find a disconnect where the strategy omits several other areas of legislation that relate to forests. These findings however tell us very little of the process of integration of competences between member states and the supranational EU level.

2.3 Research Gap

The review of previous research shows that there is a definitive lack of research in general on EUs forest policy area, especially so from a European integration perspective. Andersson (2007) tracked the initial emergence of forest policies on the European scene and the establishment of the first forest strategy. Since then, studies on the continued development of the policy sector have come to disparate conclusions. Andersson (2007) and Bjärstig (2012) seem to have found circumstances pointing towards a development that will lead to forest policy being formalized as a competence in the EU treaties. Edwards & Kleinschmit (2013) however describe a lack of interest among member states for transferring authority to the EU on forest policy, rather they expect coordinating solutions to be found. I have here identified an unresolved controversy on what actually drives integration on the area and how it is explained. With one side claiming that there are pressures acting that will result in deeper, formalized integration while the other side argues that member states are both unwilling to let this happen and capable of hindering it, instead seeking non-supranational coordinating solutions.

Further of interest is the use of integration theories. Andersson (2007) and Bjärstig (2012) base their analysis solely on Neofunctionalist theory, not contrasting it with any other theories. While Edwards & Kleinschmit (2013) as stated offer a different perspective, arguing that coordination is more likely they do not relate these assumptions and thoughts to any integration theory. I argue that this lop-sidedness is a flaw and there could be valuable insights gained by contrasting Neofunctionalism and including other perspectives.

3. Research Aim and Question

With the previous research in mind, the thesis has two primary aims. First a descriptive one, as it will try to describe the development of the Forest Strategy implemented from 2014. But in a wider sense its intention is to delve into the mechanics of integration and decipher why countries may choose to deepen, or not to, their political cooperation. As stated, the research on forest politics from an integration perspective is centred on the emergence of the first Forestry Strategy. Due to this I believe the Forestry Strategy from 1998 to be a logical starting point for the further research conducted in this thesis work. The lack of theoretical diversity was also pointed out, the sole integration theory employed on the area was Neofunctionalism. I aim to complement that in this study, in order to gain a deeper understanding of what drives integration in this area and how it is explained.

The specific question is: Who and what is driving integration in the forest policy area?

4. Integration Theory

The purpose of integration theory is to try to explain why countries engage in collective coordination and why they cede authority from the national state to shared institutions, but also why they at times do not and why they might disintegrate (Schmitter, 2002). Integration theory can be understood as a sub-strand of international relations theory. The purpose of integration theory is closely aligned with my question, which is I find it to be a useful tool for my work. Especially as the previous research was anchored primarily in neofunctionalism, utilizing additional theories will be beneficial. In this section I will first discuss my choice of theories, before delving into their backgrounds and core ideas before reasoning about what their practical assumptions are.

The two theories used for this thesis work are Neofunctionalism and New Intergovernmentalism, subsections of the two long term mainstream theories on European integration. The version of Neofunctionalism used in this essay will be the version constructed by Stone Sweet and Sandholtz (1997). Complementing and used to contrast it is New Intergovernmentalism developed by Bickenton et al (2015). In contrast to Moravcik's Liberal Intergovernmentalism I argue it's better equipped to explain the daily machinations of the EU. Moravcik's theory is more focused on the grand bargains of the EU where treaties are negotiated. New Intergovernmentalism also focuses strictly on post-Maastricht developments within the union and its theoretical assumptions are adapted thereafter. I consider this a strength for this thesis since the events which this work aims to cover also occur post-Maastricht, this makes it more applicable than other versions of intergovernmentalism.

Albeit developed some nearly 20 years earlier, Stone Sweet and Sandholtz's neofunctionalism is also conceived in a post-Maastricht time frame. While they were unable to account for some more recent happenings within the EU (that Bickenton et al were able to incorporate) I still find

that their theory is useful for this work and their premises are applicable to the question which I aim to answer.

4.1 Neofunctionalism

Haas was the first to use the term Neofunctionalism and is considered the original founder of the theory. It built on functionalist theory, which was mainly constructed as an alternative to realism. Functionalists criticized the idea that the self-interest of states was the primal driver of interaction between states, focusing instead on how states might cooperate to solve shared needs and interests (Bache et al, 2014).

The core concept of neofunctionalism is the belief that international politics is not solely an arena where monolithic state meets but rather that the international arena allows for a myriad of different actors. With this comes the belief that non-state actors, organizations and even individuals are not limited to national politics and directly partake in international politics and do so in impactful ways. They also introduced the concept of spillover which they considered one of the main forces pushing for deeper integration. Spillover came in two forms, functional and political. The functional spillover is related to the shared European market. The intertwinement of the different sectors means that EU intervention in one sector creates a need for further integration into adjacent sectors. Political spillover is the concept that the creation of supranational institutions creates an environment where officials meet and consistently interact, creating a sort of shared logic that makes them more prone to encourage further integration leading to increasing pressures for integration over time (Bache et al, 2014).

In their development of Neofunctionalism Stone Sweet and Sandholtz (1997) name "transnational exchange, supranational organization, and European Community (EC) rule-making" as the three main drivers of European integration. Transnational exchange effect on integration is shortly described as these exchanges creating a need for shared regulation across

states, transnational actors are considered important as they themselves will argue for the necessity of these changes. Linked to this is the concept of functional spillover (introduced by earlier neofunctionalists), where increased shared regulating in one sector creates the need for shared rulemaking in adjacent sectors due to further market pressures.

They also share the second form of spillover with previous neofunctionalists, political spillover. This spillover is more concerned with supranational organization and European rulemaking, once the supranational level is formed the actors in this arena will become institutionalized. Constant interaction between national and supranational actors is the social aspect of this, whilst a growing body of rules also creates a context which allows for further integration and makes exiting more difficult. Transnational groups may also directly influence the supranational decision making, such as corporations, interest groups etc. The Commission is generally considered independent and capable of pursuing agendas that the member states do not support (Stone Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997).

Supranational decision making is thus not simply considered as an aggregate result of national governments negotiating but the process is greatly influenced by the supranational context, its norms and rules, that it operates within. Governments are rather seen as reactive, reacting to intertwined markets and a continuous process of integration. Although integration is seen as continuous it's not regarded as a linear process, where the EU is getting more and more integrated over time. Integration might be non-existent and slow in some areas while progressing in other areas, depending on the transnational demands and market needs (Stone Sweet and Sandholtz, 1997).

Let's summarize what neofunctionalism implies for integration: Integration is likely to increase over time, even if not in a linear way. Due to both forms of spillover, self-reinforcing patterns are formed. Especially what by what Stone Sweet and Sandholtz refer as institutionalization, supranational rules once set create momentum in of themselves. Where actors meet on the international level and start to socialize and create an elite pressure for reform. As such new

rules creates a self-reinforcing loop. The commission is especially viewed as an actor pursuing more supranational authority, as it in the process would strengthen itself. The Parliament too would probably be eager to follow this path, as it also would gain more influence if the EU's authority is strengthened. Member states on the other hand are mostly reactive, reacting to all these pressures. Interest groups are also noted for being able to directly influence decision making on the European level.

4.2 New Intergovernmentalism

The core concept of intergovernmentalism as an integration theory is that states are the primary actors of integration. The theory harks back to Stanley Hoffman who constructed the first intergovernmentalist theories as a response to neofunctionalism. He disagreed with the almost linear projection of ever deepening integration that neofunctionalists claimed. He also put states at the forefront, considering them the most important actors in the process of integration. The positions of states were conceived with national interests in mind, often with electoral considerations. Integration would only ensue when states agreed to and when their respective interests harmonized (Bache et al, 2014).

A later rendition of Intergovernmentalism is Liberal Intergovernmentalism created by Moravcsik (1993). As the name suggests it merges two theoretical strands. Building on Hoffman's intergovernmentalism he added core parts from liberal international theory. Chiefly the idea about how policy preferences are formed on the national level as a sort of negotiation between different domestic interests. These policy preferences are what the member states have in mind when they negotiate within the EU and thus in extension shape how integration proceeds.

New Intergovernmentalism as presented by Bickerton et al (2015) is a further development of intergovernmentalist theory, both building on and contrasting Moravcsik's Liberal Intergovernmentalism. New Intergovernmentalism presents a somewhat different view of how

states conduct themselves. Previous editions of intergovernmentalism view the EU's member states as selfish nation states ruthlessly pursuing their national interests Bickenton et al (2015) argue. They instead present an idea that nations identify themselves as member states and consistently work within the framework of the European Union to find solutions, preferably by consensus.

New Intergovernmentalism also presents a different view on policy preferences compared to Moravcik's theory where the positions of member states are shaped by national preferences. Instead, they portray a more dynamic situation where interest groups try to affect policy making both abroad and nationally, the various institutions also affect each other's viewpoints continuously (Bickenton et al, 2015).

They reject neofunctionalism's idea that supranationalism is more likely over time due to market pressures and institutionalization. They acknowledge that EU integration is deepening, but not by expanding its supranational powers. Instead, coordination and close cooperation is preferred. When delegation of powers does occur, the preferred solution is to create "de novo bodies" that are independent of the commission, instead of ceding more power to the commission. Examples of this is the ECB and ESM. These de novo bodies often have a decision process where member states are more directly involved. This is a departure from the classical supranational integration where powers are ceded to the Commission and CJEU (Bickenton et al, 2015).

They also argue that EU institutions do not inherently seek to increase supranational powers as assumed by neofunctionalist theory. The Commission and the CJEU might pursue more EU authority when they have the opportunity to do so, but often do not. The Commission in general is seen as highly adaptable to the will of the member states. The Parliament on the other hand seeks to increase its relative power, not always by increasing supranationalism but most often at the cost of other institutions. As such the Parliament is chiefly interested in making sure that the decision processes involve them (Bickenton et al, 2015).

They believe that a driver for integration is that member states often find themselves unable to regulate sectors effectively domestically and thus try to solve these issues collectively within the EU. This does not, however, mean that they always agree on binding legislation, rather open coordination is preferred. Where consensus is found on the European stage, but actual legislation is drafted and implemented in the own state. This avoids one size fits all legislative solutions, while still allowing for collective problem solving. Another factor is the increasing intensity of Euroscepticism within the EU, rendering supranational and legally binding solutions politically unpalatable. Thus, coordination becomes more appealing to politicians in relation to other solutions (Bickenton et al, 2015).

To summarize what New Intergovernmentalism means for the integration process: The core assumption is that the member states are likely to dictate the integration process. In the circumstance that the member states find a need for more cooperation on an area, they would pursue more coordination as they are wary of transferring power. In stark contrast to Neofunctionalism the Commission is not viewed as innately striving for increased EU authority but rather most probable to align itself alongside the member states. While the Parliament is most likely eager to ensure it has the most relative power on issues.

5. Material and Method

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the material chosen for the study, the second discusses the method employed while the third and last is dedicated to how the theories will be utilized in the analysis.

5.1 Material

In table 1, the material is presented with titles and brief descriptions. After this the choice of material is discussed in further depth. All the material used are documents from EU institutions. As this study aims to study specifically the EU and processes within it they are direct sources.

One could claim that this narrow focus specifically on the forest strategies (and documents related directly to them) as an expression of the EU's position on forest politics is too narrow. Indeed, as stated in the previous research section there's a considerable mass of other legislation that affect forests. This could mean that blindly focusing on the strategies leads to a misrepresentative portrayal of the actual process of integration on this area. While acknowledging this, I argue that it's legitimate to focus on the forest strategies as they are the explicitly referenced to by EU institutions as the union's main documents on forest policy.

Table 1: Material

Document title:	Description
Forestry Strategy for the European Union (1998)	The first forest strategy in the EU, considered the basis for EUs involvement on forest issues. It is issued by the Commission. The document outlines the EUs goals for the policy area, with expectations placed on the Commission and member states alike.
A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector (2013)	The second forest strategy, in effect from 2014.
COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT Accompanying [...] A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector (2013).	Working document with background information on the issues that the strategy relates to. Of most relevance for this thesis work is that it also details the process of developing the strategy
A new EU Forest strategy: conclusions adopted by the Council (2014)	This document contains the conclusions by the Council of the European Union on the strategy adopted by the Commission.
European Parliament resolution of 28 April 2015 on ‘A new EU Forest Strategy: for forests and the forest-based sector (2015)	Resolution adopted by the European Parliament stating its opinions on the forest strategy, after it was published by the Commission.

As stated in the previous research section, the forest strategies are enacted by the Commission and are considered the main documents on EU forest policy. The original Forestry Strategy from 1998 is viewed as the founding document that defines the EUs role on forest issues. In 2014 the new Forest Strategy supplanted the original strategy. Except the subtle name change from Forestry - to Forest strategy they hold the same function (EU Commission, 2020).

Comparing these two strategies on EU forest policy allows for a comparison over time and to assess whether integration has advanced. This can be achieved by analysing how the roles of member states and the EU institutions are formulated. Also, by seeing which policy objectives are staked out in each respective document? Have these objectives expanded in scope?

The Commission's working document is valuable as it allows for insight into the process of drafting the new strategy. How the process played out, which actors were involved and what role they played. Meanwhile the European Parliaments and Councils statements and conclusions are useful for assessing the positions and intentions of the respective institutions on the Strategy. The Parliaments resolution is adopted with simple majority, while Council require consensus among member states to adopt conclusions.

The Commission communicated the strategy the 20th of September 2013 with implementation to be begin in 2014, the working document was published together with the strategy. It is important to note that the Parliament's and Council's statements were published after the strategy was adopted by the Commission. The Council published their statement the 19th of May 2014 which is about half a year after. Parliaments adopted their resolution 28th of April 2015, which is more than a year and a half after the Commission communicated their strategy. As such these statements had no impact on the actual strategy, however they do show the attitudes of the respective institution towards the strategy and give clues on how influential they have been on the final outcome of the strategy.

The documents are varied in form. The strategies are based on various objectives to be met, with accompanying texts. The Council's statement is written in the form of numbered statements, each with a smaller paragraph of text. The Parliament's statement is composed entirely in the form of listed clauses, there is no free text. The Parliament's document is especially expansive, including over 100 clauses. The working document is split into various sections and is primarily free text.

5.2 Method

The general type of method used is a qualitative document analysis. A qualitative approach is best suited for this thesis work due to the interpretative nature of its aim to decipher how the forest strategies relate to further integration on the forest policy area and also to interpret the accompanying documents and statements. The alternative would be to apply a quantitative document analysis. I however believe that simply counting key words to measure the stances of various institutions is too blunt an instrument. It does not allow for a holistic assessment of the respective documents nor for interpretation. Hence in the case of this study I believe a qualitative document analysis is the best tool to get nuanced insights into the question at hand (Esaiaasson et al, 2017 s.211-216).

For the comparison to be of value it's critical that the analytical units are homogenous, so that the study as the idiom goes doesn't compare apples to oranges (Esaissaon et al, 2017 s.92). As previously stated, the two forest strategies are identical in function, the latter has simply supplanted the previous edition. The Council's statement and Parliament's resolution are also comparable. While as explained under material they have some differences in form, they offer the same function and are the expression of the respective institutions on the Forest Strategy. As such I believe that the criteria of homogeneity is sufficiently fulfilled.

The tool used to conduct the qualitative analysis is process tracing. Process tracing is as the name implies about tracing the process leading to a certain outcome. As such it focuses more on the causal chains and mechanisms rather than the outcome in itself. This technique is also useful for testing theories. By analysing how the actors involved behaved we can make more general assumptions on behaviour and decision processes in certain situations. This is where the theories come into play. The theories can be used to create assumptions on how the actors ought to behave and what the outcome ought to be. By process tracing one can then track a certain process and see whether it is possible to observe these hypotheses empirically and thus ascertain the theories assumptions (Esaiaasson et al, 2015).

To more extensively trace the process and thus get a more correct description it would be of value to include more material than the 5 documents used. Interviews for example could be of complementary value by providing first-hand accounts from individuals involved in the process. However due to the time constraints of this thesis work the decision to restrict the material to official documents made for a much more manageable sample. As such the method conducted in this thesis work is a more limited form of process tracing.

Of critical importance when conducting a study is to ensure that there is a good level of validity and reliability. Validity is simply put about accurately measuring what the study claims to measure, while reliability is about ensuring that the results are repeatable (Esaiasson et al, 2015). The qualitative method that I employ is interpretative in nature, which makes the need to reflect on these issues even more acute. As I processed the material in the results section I homed in on statements and sections that carried weight to my question. A great part of the documents were various statements where the institutions stressed the importance of forests and plenty of background information, these parts were mostly left out the results and analysis as I believe they had limited relevance on my question. Instead, I concentrated on statements that referred to action: who was involved were, what do they believe should be done and who should do it. As such I believe I faithfully captured how the respective institutions were involved and what their stances on integration of the policy area are. To achieve full transparency on how the analysis is conducted the next chapter will precise how the theories will be used to analyse the empirical findings. This transparency will allow for scrutiny of and increase the repeatability of my study, which is vital for both the validity and the reliability.

5.3 Theoretical Expectations

Under the theory section I outlined the implications of the respective theories on the topic at hand. Before conducting the results and analysis, these implications are here specified to what they might imply for the documents used as material in the form of two rivalling sets of expectations. These expectations will be used to analyse the material.

5.3.1 Neofunctionalism expectations:

The first forest strategy can be seen as a vantage point for further and deeper integration on the area. Once the forestry strategy was established as a charter for forest related policies it creates a set platform where there are opportunities to make further decisions on forests, also forming an environment where actors both national and supranational consistently interact on these issues. This is what is termed as political spillover. The strategy is especially prone to increase in ambition since the Commission, which is portrayed as seeking ever deeper integration, has the power to singlehandedly adopt strategies. Member states, represented here through the Council's statement, are likely to be more hesitant towards the strategy if the Commission strives for more integration than they find appropriate. The Parliament's statement is likely to call for a strengthening of the EU's authority on the policy issue and that it should take a wider approach, encompassing more goals and objectives. Since as discussed in the theory section, increasing EU powers gives the Parliament more influence.

5.3.2 New Intergovernmentalism expectations:

The New Forestry strategy is likely to call for more coordination and cooperation between member states without demands for legislative solutions that increase supranationalism. As discussed in the theory chapter this is the general stance of New Intergovernmentalism, based on the belief that member states wield strong influence on the integration process. Member states

see the value in cooperation but believe supranational solutions are too inflexible for the individual state, additionally supranational integration is often unpopular domestically. They also state that the Commission is probable to align itself mostly alongside the member states. If this is correct, then in this case with a strategy that is entirely produced by the Commission it should mostly centre on coordinative solutions. Further, the Councils statement ought to be positive of the strategy if this is case. The European Parliament would be more inclined to make sure that it as an institution has the maximum amount of relative influence on the topic, rather than a shift in authority from member states to the supranational level. The Parliament is more concerned about the process and their role as an institution rather than the outcome.

6. Results and Analysis

The results section will be presented in four sections. The first three presenting the results in chronological order. First of is the Forestry Strategy from 1998, the role of this part is to act as point of reference to gauge what has changed come the second Strategy. The subsequent part is titled “The Second Strategy“, including the Working document and Forest Strategy communicated in 2013. Together they present how the process of drafting the strategy has gone and its outcome. Third, is the part called Institutional Responses, in this part both the Council’s statement and the Parliaments resolution on the Forest Strategy are discussed and compared. After these three parts is the analysis chapter. The first three parts present the material in detail, presenting vital parts and what is most crucial from the theoretical perspective. In the analysis chapter a more thorough analysis is conduct in relation to the theories and previous research.

6.1 The Starting Point

6.1.1 Forestry Strategy (1998)

The first strategy, called the Forestry Strategy was enacted in 1998. The Commission motivates the strategy’s existence by referring to existing competences such as rural development, the common market and environmental protection. Its expressed aim was to promote the forestry industry while also taking in mind other interests such as environmental protection, biodiversity, social benefits among others. It highlights forests role as a source of environmentally beneficial resources and promotes sustainable forestry, connected to sustainability is the aim to divert EU research grants focused on environmentally friendly forestry combined with production. Another key goal is to facilitate increased information sharing between member states. The Standing Forestry Committee (The committee consists of one of one representative from each member state) is granted a prominent role as a platform for discussion on forest policy between the Commission and the member states, with the hopes that

this will increase coordination. All things considered the strategy also clearly states that member states are ultimately responsible for forest policy and national forest plans.

6.2 The Second Strategy

6.2.1 Working Document (2013)

The Working document acts as a logical starting point to analyse the process. As discussed in the material chapter, the working document was published together with the Forest Strategy by the Commission and provides background information on what led to the strategy and how it was produced. My main conclusion from the working document is that member states seem to be involved in every step of the process as parts of the Standing Forestry Committee and in a working group which prepared the strategy. While on the other hand, the Parliament seems to be entirely excluded from the process.

The Standing Forestry Committee (Which as stated in the previous chapter is composed only by representatives of the member states) played a key role in the development of the strategy, discussing it in both 2010 and 2011. Additionally, a working group described as “ad-hoc” under the Standing Forestry Committee with representatives from the Commission, member states and interest holders such as forest industry and owners, environmental groups is accredited for their contribution to the work by drafting a report on a new strategy in 2012. The report was then discussed in a workshop with member states and stakeholders and forwarded with approval from the Standing Forest Committee to the Commission.

Note in this passage under the headline “1.3. Consultation with member states and stakeholders” (Page 9) how the EP is completely left out. “The new Communication on a Forest Strategy builds on a very close and extensive consultation process with both member states and

stakeholders during the preparatory phase”. Parliament is not mentioned at all, stakeholders referring in this context to industry and various interests' groups.

6.2.1 Forest Strategy (2014)

After having reviewed the process leading up to the strategy, I move on the actual document itself the 2014 Forest Strategy. The Rural Development funds are a focal point of the strategy. About 90% of the EU financing of forest related ends come through Rural Development. Commission and Member states alike hope to steer money towards forest ends to promote the sector and increase its sustainability. Another goal is to coordinate research done on these topics throughout the union. Looking beyond Rural Development, The Commission will create criteria for sustainable forest management. Member States should for example increase forests' use for climate mitigation and create value for the ecosystem services forests provide, while the commission will oversee their progress. Just like in the previous strategy, information sharing is highlighted. In this new edition Member states and the Commission have the objective of creating a common information sharing system. It's a shared responsibility as Member states are tasked with making more information available, while the Commission will facilitate sharing. One of the core concepts promoted is that EU policy that affects forests need to be coherent and promote synergies.

In conclusion the strategy mostly suggests that Member States are responsible for reaching the various objectives, the Commission's role is primarily about monitoring progress and promoting coordination. The more “supranational” role the Commission has is on the Rural Development funds, however these are administered nationally and thus Member states share responsibility here as well. There are no objectives about creating EU legislation. In substance this edition shares much of the same topics as the first one; information sharing and research. The second strategy puts a larger focus on the environment and sustainability.

With this in mind, I believe that this second strategy does not show any drifts towards increased supranationalism. It is mostly an update to keep its objectives up to date, while ambitions have grown on certain areas such as sustainability. As such it refutes the Neofunctionalist projection that the second edition ought to grow in scope and lean towards more supranational solutions. The New Intergovernmentalist expectation was for coordination to increase. Coordinative objectives are indeed the key part of the strategy,

6.3 Institutional Responses

Starting with the Council's response as they published their response the earliest, on the 19th of May 2014. The Council's statement is very welcoming of the strategy, urging for it to be implemented by the Commission and Member states alike. Which can be seen from the following quotes from three different clauses: "9. WELCOMES the Communication from the Commission..." (s.3), "10. ENDORSES in general the EU Forest Strategy..." (s.4), "29 INVITES the Commission and Member States to implement the EU Forest Strategy..." (s.9)

They also state that while the EU has policies related to forests it is still a national competence and all policies on forests should respect the principle of subsidiarity. Other decisions and policies concerning forests should align with the intention and aims of the Forest Strategy. They complement the strategy for its increased emphasis on more coordination and strengthen that this is a key priority for them. The working document previously showed how the member states were directly involved in the process leading up to the publishing of the forest strategy. That the Council is so welcoming of the strategy is a sign that their concerns and intentions were heeded by the Commissions. I argue that this is a confirmation of the New Intergovernmentalist assumption that the commission will adapt itself to the Member states' will. Neofunctionalism portrays member states as reactive, forced to adapt by pressures on further integration. These findings on the contrary seem to suggest that the Member states are very much in charge and able to dictate the process.

Roughly a year later, on the 28th of April 2015, the Parliament agreed on a resolution as a response to the strategy. The resolution clearly states that the EU should not expand its authority and try to create a common forestry policy. This can clearly be seen in this clause: “4. Stresses in this connection that any attempt to make forestry a matter of EU policy should be resisted and that the sector’s local and regional basis and the competence of the Member States in this area must be respected while seeking coherence between the respective competences of the EU and the Member States“

The resolution is however welcoming of the strategy and expresses a belief that it’s a very important and needed document. They stress that the EU has an important role to play by coordinating and ushering forth change in areas such as information sharing and promoting sustainable forest management among other things and are supportive of the measures suggested in the strategy to achieve this. Also highlight the need to make sure that EU policies stemming from other competences but still affect forests are aligned with the strategy. They also believe that several key things are omitted in the strategy. For example, labour conditions of those working in the forestry industry, gender equality and promoting the role of women in the industry.

The working document gave the impression that the Parliament was left out of the process leading up to the new strategy, the resolution confirms this as it expresses dismay that they were unable to voice their opinions until after the strategy was publicly communicated by the Commission with implementation already under way. This is clearly inferred in the two following clauses:

“99. Stresses that the implementation of the EU’s forest strategy should be a multiannual coordinated process in which the views of Parliament should be taken into account and that the strategy should be implemented efficiently, coherently and with minimal red tape;

100. Regrets that the implementation process has partly begun before Parliament has adopted its position, and considers that this is not in line with the aim of better coordination of forest-related policies as stated by the Commission in its Strategy text”

It is a challenge to come to a definitive conclusion whether the Parliament’s resolution supports either theory over the other. The New Intergovernmentalism expectation was that the parliament is most interested in the process and its relative influence, which was confirmed with the Parliament’s disappointment on their lack of influence. One might however argue that this is an extreme case, as the Parliament seems entirely side-lined and not just worried about relative power. Regardless of theoretical outlook one might logically assume this would be a cause of frustration. Meanwhile the Neofunctionalist expectation was that the Parliament would seek greater EU authority. In part this is confirmed as the resolution points out several areas which Parliament wished the strategy would include. However, the resolution also clearly states that a common, supranational Forest Policy is undesirable which shows that the parliament does not inherently seek increased supranationalism.

The review of the Council’s and Parliament’s response shows that in substance they mostly agree. The Council fully supports the strategy while the Parliament asks for a more ambitious strategy in some regards, but both are in general positive of the strategy. What the two responses however also offer us an insight into is the two roles they’ve both played in drafting the strategy, the Parliament’s resolution states their exclusion while the very positive response of the Council is indicative of that they were very allowed to wield a large influence in the forming of the strategy.

6.4 Analysis

When it comes to shifts towards supranationalism, they seem non-existent. Both the strategy itself, the statements from Council and Parliament alike explicitly state that forest policy is a national competence and ought to remain so. As such it can be ascertained that no shift towards

supranational solutions are desired nor occurring. In contrast, they all also express the desire for further coordination on various issues. I argue this confirms part of the New Intergovernmentalist hypothesis that argues that coordination is the most likely solution of issues as it is preferred by member states. The Neofunctionalist might argue the lack of supranational integration is due to lack of markets pressures demanding increased integration. However, I do believe it's a rebuke of Andersson's (2007) and Bjärstig's (2012) claims that the demand for common and / or formalized forest policy was growing among member states and NGO actors. My findings are much more in line with Edwards and Kleinschmit (2013) who found that member states are wary of ceding authority to the EU and instead project coordinative measures on forest policy.

Andersson (2007) details the impactful role the parliament had in the development of the first strategy. The parliament had probed the potential for common EU forest policies and ultimately it was their Thomas report from 1995 that proposed an EU forestry strategy and in 1997 a resolution was approved in the parliament that recommended the Commission to enact a strategy. Come the second edition of the strategy the results find that they have been sidestepped, not consulted until after the strategy was already in implementation. Both the working document and the Parliament's resolution confirm this. Meanwhile the member states seem firmly in control of the process, active both in the drafting of the strategy and in the end very content with the final strategy. The working document described how member states were actively involved during the entire prelude to the publishing of the document. Additionally, the Council's statement on the strategy was very appreciate of the strategy which suggests that their wished were heeded by the Commission. This is also a clue of how to judge the Commission's actions. I believe it suggests that New Intergovernmentalism expectations are more accurate, as they suggest that the Commission is adaptable to the intentions of the Member States while Neofunctionalism outlines the Commission as an actor constantly seeking further integration. If the Commission had been pushing towards integration and acted autonomously, the response from the member states ought to have been more hesitant.

It is possible that what we discern here is a result of the fact that strategies are adopted by the Commission alone, not through the EU's legislative procedures, and importantly that it's not legally binding. So even though the Commission can include any ambitions and goals they might please, it is reliant on member states agreeing with the strategy's intentions and subsequently following through the strategies domestically for the document to have any effect. Meanwhile as the Parliament's powers are restricted to issuing their opinions on the contents of strategy, they might appear redundant. As such the Commission is incentivized to focus on the requests of the member states and include them in the process.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, no traces of a change towards further supranational integration is found in the material used, instead increased coordination appears to be the preferred path. This rebuked some of the previous research that predicted increasing formalization of forest policy. Concerning the roles of the institutions, it seems that the Member States are the ones in control of the integration process on the area, with the Commission adapting to their wishes and Parliament mostly sidelined. It is also been remarked that perhaps these findings are a result of the peculiar circumstances of EU strategies, as they are not part of the EU legislative procedures and are dependent on Member States following them through.

Let's summarize the conclusions on the two theories used in the thesis work. As we analyze the two sets of expectations, it is apparent that the set based on New Intergovernmentalism much more closely mirrored what was found in the material than was expected from the Neofunctionalism perspective. Both in how the actors behaved and the predicted outcome in the strategy. Throughout this study it has been argued that the lack of theoretical diversity in the previous research made for a flaw. I argue that the inclusion of New Intergovernmentalism made for a valuable addition that brought some of the conclusions from the previous research into question. Especially the projections of increasing integration that the previous research by Andersson (2007) and Bjärstig (2012) had made based on Neofunctionalist grounds. In a wider sense, the findings indicate that perhaps New Intergovernmentalism is more well-suited to project current developments within the union. At least under these particular circumstances, when analyzing a policy area where the EU lacks a formal competence New Intergovernmentalism seems more apt.

Ultimately, how does this all answer the research question: who and what is driving integration on the forest policy area? I have tried to answer this question by using integration theories to analyze the material. As has been previously discussed, the results find that member

states appear to have close control of the integration process on the area. Driven on by what is a perceived need for cooperation, but hesitant to allow supranational integration, they instead turn to coordination. Meanwhile the Commission follows along with the will of member states and the Parliament is mostly sidelined.

Looking ahead for areas of further research, as briefly mentioned in the introduction a new forest strategy is in the pipeline to be published soon. Perhaps this will allow for further analysis on what has happened on the area since the second strategy. One could also pursue a more all-encompassing study that includes all the EU policies on the forest area to assess the integration occurring. Alternatively, to make a more encompassing study, one could conduct a more thorough process tracing method which would include more material, for example interviews. This could offer even more detailed insights from actors involved in the integration process. Leaving forest politics behind, one could also employ the comparative use of the two integration theories used in this work on other policy areas to test if the conclusions drawn in this study also are applicable to other circumstances.

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