

1 Introduction

Forest certification has been widely promoted as a tool to set global standards for environmentally and socially responsible forest practices, and to reward forest producers who meet those standards with access to green markets. The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) was the first forest certification scheme to develop a global presence, and has strived to legitimate this presence through a complex governance structure based on principles of equitable decision-making (McDermott 2013; Tysiachniouk 2012). The FSC's institutional core includes a membership-based, multi-stakeholder platform for negotiating written certification standards. The FSC has also developed separate auditing and accreditation procedures for assessing and verifying whether forest producers are meeting those standards. These formal institutional structures are designed to ensure that FSC standards represent an equitable balance of stakeholder interests across multiple scales, and that certification yield net positive environmental and social impacts on the ground.

A growing body of literature has emerged to assess how well the FSC and competitor schemes are achieving their goals in practice. This includes research comparing and contrasting formal certification governance processes (Tollefson et al., 2008), certification standards (McDermott et al., 2009) and the environmental and social impacts of certification (McDermott et al., 2014; Moore et al., 2012; Romero et al., 2013; Teitelbaum and Wyatt, 2013). It includes studies considering how political and economic factors such as the structure of trade and strength of civil society explain differing rates of growth and differences in the content of certification standards across countries (Cashore et al. 2004; Auld et al. 2008). It includes literature expressly focused on equity, and whether certain inequalities are inevitable in certification given power differentials among stakeholders (Boström, 2012) and the disproportionate market barriers facing developing country producers, smallholders and community-based operations (McDermott, 2013; Mutersbaugh, 2005; Pinto and McDermott, 2013). At the same time, research into the on-the-ground implementation of certification has emphasized the importance of local context in further shaping power and influence over certification decisions (Malets 2014, Keskitalo et al. 2009, Tysiachniouk and Meidinger 2012). Taken together, what all of this existing research suggests is that power in certification is continually negotiated and contested across scales, and across formal and informal settings. A holistic understanding of equity in certification, therefore, requires research that considers formal, informal and contextual dimensions, and that is dynamic and multi-scale in its approach.

This study contributes to such a holistic understanding, by combining in-depth, longitudinal case study analysis with the examination of larger-scale formal and informal governance processes. The analysis is organized around the merging of two theoretical frames. The first is the concept of “governance generating networks,” which views transnational non-governmental organizations such as the FSC as a type of highly dynamic and network-based governance (Kortelainen, Kotilainen, Tysiachniouk 2010). This lens makes visible the many different sources of agency and power that drive FSC-related actions at multiple scales. Complementary to this, the concept of “equity” allows us to assess the balance of interests involved in shaping certification outcomes as well as to evaluate the type and distribution of their social impacts (McDermott, 2013).

Our local to global analysis of certification's enactment is situated in a case study in Western Russia focusing on the transnational corporation of Russian origin, Investlesprom (INP). Russia is now second only to Canada in area of FSC certified forest, and with projected growth from nearly 40 million hectares in January 2014 to up to 103 million hectares by 2030, may soon hold the largest area worldwide (FAO, 2012; FSC-AC, 2014). Thus the implementation of certification involving large Russian TNCs, such as INP, is of major significance to FSC's existing and potential future impacts at a global scale. More specifically the paper focuses on one forest management certification area located in Karelia Republic, which is one of the largest areas leased by the INP subsidiary Segezha PPM.

The GGN and Equity Frameworks can be applied together to assess all aspects of FSC decision-making, from scheme governance, to standard-setting and implementation. Our analysis focuses, in particular, on the dimensions of multi-level governance and on-the-ground implementation. We begin by introducing the two frameworks and their application to FSC governance at the international and national levels. This is followed by a case study that hones in on the implementation or enactment of certification standards on the ground within the forest subsidiaries of Investlesprom. In particular, we compare and contrast implementation of a select set of core environmental and social requirements for FSC certification, consisting of the protection of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVF), community participation and local benefit-sharing. The GGN and Equity frameworks are applied to understand how the standards addressing these issues are translated into on-the-ground outcomes, and what this means in terms of equity across interest groups and scales.

2 The theoretical framework and its application to the FSC

The GGN concept was partly developed as a grounded theory in the process of studying and analyzing the FSC network. It also draws on two existing bodies of literature, the sociology of transnational processes (Sassen 2006, 2008, Castells 1996, 1997) and the literature on policy and governance networks (Sørensen and Torfing, 2005, 2007). According to GGN theory, networks which play a crucial role in the development of global regulatory tools, products, or standards to be implemented in different parts of the World are named Governance Generating Networks (GGNs) (Tysiachniouk 2012). The three major components of such networks are i) the nodes of global governance design, ii) forums of negotiations and iii) sites of implementation.

The nodes of global design are transnational centers, which bring together stakeholders from around the globe working on new regulatory products, e.g. new tools, strategies and instruments for global governance. Much of the existing research on FSC governance has focused on these nodes of design, which in the case of the FSC have evolved into highly formalized institutional structures. However, as will be clear from our case study analysis, there are many important decisions that are made outside of these formal structures. The GGN framework captures these external dynamics via the concepts of "forums of negotiation" and "sites of implementation". Forums of negotiation include not only those platforms for stakeholder engagement that are expressly part of the FSC's formal procedures, but also a wide diversity of venues external to the FSC. External forums may range from market campaigns to academic conferences to town hall meetings, all of which play a role in shaping the thoughts and actions of FSC decision-makers. Forums of negotiation are part and parcel of the GGNs in the sense that they play a role in all phases of the governance process, from standards

development, framing and translation to adoption and implementation (Tysiachniouk 2006, 2012, Kortelainen et al. 2010). Sites of implementation are the physical territories where global governance is translated and adapted to local circumstances. In the context of the FSC, key sites of implementation are the forest management units undergoing assessments for FSC certification.

The global node of design for the FSC GGN is its Civil Assembly, registered in 1993 in Oaxaca, Mexico and managed from FSC's International center, located in Bonn, Germany. The FSC is a membership-based organization, intended to provide equitable access to all interested non-governmental stakeholders who can demonstrate their commitment to FSC principles. FSC membership is distributed across three chambers, the environmental, social and economic chambers (see Figure 1.-internal grey circle). Each chamber is afforded equal vote, with the intention of achieving equity across environmental, social and economic interests. Voting by the FSC membership is likewise divided between "Southern" and "Northern" members, requiring majority approval from both the global South and North. The FSC International Center is responsible for the development of the FSC's ten Principles and Criteria (P&C), which outline the requirements for forest management certification applicable to all certified operations worldwide. The original FSC P&C and all subsequent updates require approval from FSC's international membership.

National and regional offices constitute subordinated nodes of design, at smaller geographical scales (Figure 1.-FSC in grey rounds). These nodes, like the FSC international membership, are also organized into social, environmental and economic chambers. Their purpose is to develop national indicators to supplement the FSC P&C, and to further govern the FSC process within the nation state. The FSC national offices, serve as a link between the global FSC node, and its sites of implementation in particular countries.

In regards to the forums of negotiation that are either formally or informally associated with the FSC, the primary focus of this paper is on those forums that have influenced the interpretation of the FSC P&C and Russian national indicators in the context of the certification of INP. The FSC has a number of institutionalized forums of negotiation at the international and national scales which are crucial to the development of its written standards. However, as will be clear from our case study, forums of negotiation associated with the FSC's implementation have largely emerged on an ad hoc basis through the efforts of particular stakeholder coalitions.

[Insert Figure 1 The GGN Framework]

While the GGN thus maps out the decision-making dynamics of the FSC at multiple scales, our other theoretical lens, the "Equity Framework", provides a means to assess the resulting balance of power and interests this map entails. Equity is a principle well embedded within the FSC's overall goals and mission (McDermott, 2013). "Equity" in this context, is understood as the achievement of equality across some agreed upon social measure (Sen, 1992). Consistent with this definition, the FSC's nodes of design aim for an equal voice among its recognized stakeholders across environmental, economic and social interest, Northern and Southern hemispheres, and across scales. Likewise, the FSC has articulated goals for equal access to certification among large and small forest producers and the sharing of forestry's benefits with local communities (McDermott, 2013). These goals constitute FSC's visions for equity and provide a

backdrop against which to consider the balance of power that is currently enacted through the FSC GGN.

Given the complexity of the FSC as a multi-scale GGN, assessing equity is likewise a complex and multi-scale endeavor. For the purposes of our analysis, therefore, we draw on McDermott et al's "Equity Framework" that provides a road map for systematically assessing equity across its various parameters and dimensions (McDermott et al., 2013). Firstly, we are interested in what these authors refer to as the outer *parameter* of equity, that of "parameter-setting". This parameter addresses who is included and excluded in setting an organization's or intervention's overarching goals, priorities and objectives. In the context of the FSC as a GGN, this encompasses not only inclusion and exclusion in formal standard-setting processes (nodes of design), but also inclusion and exclusion in formal and informal forums of negotiation and sites of implementation.

We are also concerned with the innermost parameter of the Equity Framework that of the "content" of equity or the definition of precisely what must be equal as defined by FSC standards and processes. Within this parameter, McDermott et al (2013) distinguish between procedural and distributive *dimensions* of equity. Procedural equity refers to the balance of participation in decision-making processes: for example, the balance of international and local interests and environmental and social stakeholders. Distributive equity, in contrast, encompasses the distribution of material risks, costs and benefits--e.g. the distribution of certification's net benefits across large versus small forest operators and among forest companies and local communities. For the purposes of this analysis, we use this distinction between procedural and distributive equity to assess the actual, on-the-ground outcomes of certification. That is, we distinguish between outcomes involving process-based change in the form of community participation in forestry decision-making, and distributive outcomes in the form of changes in the distribution of material benefits from forestry.

Since our focus is on *social* equity, we assess equity from the standpoint of human stakeholders, and not equity between humans and non-human actors and the environment. Hence when we assess equity in the implementation of environmental standards, we are concerned with procedural equity in decision-making processes and the distribution of benefits to humans in the form of environmental outcomes that serve particular sets of interests. We do not attempt to assess the degree to which these outcomes do, or do not, benefit the non-human environment.

Figure 2 below outlines an Equity Framework for assessing the equity of the FSC as a GGN.

[Insert Figure 2 The Equity Framework]

2.1 Combining the GGN and Equity Frameworks

If we now consider the GGN and Equity Frameworks together, it is possible to assess whether the concepts of equity embodied in the FSC's formal governance or "parameter-setting" structures are yielding an equitable balance of power in practice.

In this paper we empirically uncover a range of factors that, despite the equal distribution of votes across the FSC's three chambers, are influencing the relative capacity of each chamber to assert their interests. For example, chambers vary greatly in

their total number of members, as well as in the relative number of high capacity organizational members (including transnational NGOs and large corporations) as opposed to individual members. As of September 2014, the FSC had 864 members distributed between chambers as follows: environmental 263 (143 individual, 120 organizations), economic 444 (140 individual, 304 organizations), and social 157 (96 individual, 61 organizations). Not only does the social chamber have the fewest members of any kind, but its broad categorization as “social” encompasses a wide range of interests. Some of these interests, such as trade unions and indigenous peoples are relatively well organized, while others lack coordinated representation of any kind. Indeed participatory research into the international decision-making processes of the FSC has indicated that the social chamber holds relatively little influence (Bostrom 2012).

The power dynamics across chambers in FSC-Russia mirrors that of FSC international. As of September 2014 FSC-Russia had 37 economic, 22 environmental and 13 social members. Of these national members, 10 were also international members of the FSC. The international members included three organizational members (certification bodies) and two individual members in the economic chamber, one organizational member (WWF) in the environmental chamber, and four individual members in the social chamber. Only one member from the social chamber (co-author of this paper), participated in the standards development process and in working groups at the international level. Hence the Russian social chamber was not only outnumbered at the national level, but was also less densely networked at the international level.

Power dynamics within the FSC system are also affected by the variable strength of strategic alliances and advocacy networks inside and outside the FSC that shape access to resources and decision-making power (Castells 2009). The distribution of power within the FSC, is thus contested not only within the FSC’s own formal structures, but also through a wider network of formal and informal forums of negotiation and sites of implementation.

In sum, the FSC’s international and national nodes of design (i.e. their governance structures) suggest a procedural balance of power among environmental, social and economic interests which is not achieved in practice. These nodes of design provide the formal platforms for developing FSC’s certification standards, which are intended to define good forest practices in Russia. However, as will be clear from the following case study analysis, setting the parameters of good forestry does not in practice stop with the development of written standards, but rather is further elaborated through various forums of negotiation and at the sites of certification’s implementation. All of these dimensions in turn shape the *outcomes* of certification and its impacts on procedural rights and the distribution of benefits.

3 Methods

The research is situated in a case study of the forest management certification of an INP subsidiary, the Segezha PPM lease, which operates in the Karelia Republic. The Segezha PPM was selected as a highly relevant and significant case for several reasons. INP is a transnational corporation of Russian origin, and as such serves to demonstrate processes of transformation within the Russian forest sector, while also illustrating the particular challenges that Russian firms face related to certification. The Segezha PPM is one of INP’s largest leases, and hence the experiences with certification there are of

significant importance to the company as well as to the affected forests and communities.

This paper's use of a case study approach is grounded in a 'critical realism' epistemology. The focus of critical realism is on uncovering 'causal mechanisms' that explain how certification was actualized within a particular local context (Bhaskar, 1989), e.g. the Segezha PPM in this case. Understanding these causal mechanisms contributes, in turn, to a broader understanding of factors shaping certification dynamics. Consistent with this case study approach, the end goal is not to identify universal laws about how certification works across all contexts, but rather to understand how underlying mechanisms, or 'tendencies' of the actors and institutions enacting certification interact within a given global to local context to produce particular outcomes. The term "tendencies" here refers to the ensemble of structures, powers and relations that enable or constrain particular behaviors (Fleetwood, 2001). This epistemological approach is particularly appropriate for studying the FSC as a highly complex, dynamic, multi-scale governance generating network, i.e. what is known as an 'open system' in critical realist terms, within which many other mechanisms and conditions co-exist (Zachariadis et al., 2013) to produce variable outcomes in different sites of implementation.

From a critical realist perspective, the strength of our analysis lies in the long-term, intensive and iterative nature of the research, conducted over a period of eight years, and its use of mixed methods. This includes in-depth participant observation and action research, semi-structured and open-ended interviews and focus groups, combined with a review of primary and secondary data sources, including international and national certification policies and procedures, literature on the political and economic context of the Russian forest sector and other relevant academic and grey literature.

The methodological approach was highly participatory, in that one of the authors was also a practitioner involved in various ways with the FSC in Russia and the certification of Segezha PPM. Such direct engagement highlights the role of the researcher in shaping research priorities and determining what is and is not included in the analysis. While this creates a 'bias', such bias is inevitable in the interpretation of social phenomenon. While critical realism supports the idea of an objective 'reality' independent of human actors, it views the construction of knowledge as an inherently social undertaking (Zachariadis et al., 2013). The 'reality' of interest to social scientists consists not only of observable events, but also causal mechanisms that are inherently subjective such as norms, values and motivations which manifest in different ways in different contexts. The probity and validity of research depends on the explanatory power of the causal mechanisms it identifies and the adequacy of the empirical data presented for developing and testing these causal mechanisms over time and across contexts. The direct engagement of researchers in their field of study over an extended period can provide a wealth of data and insight. The challenge for the researcher is to then present the data and its analysis in a way that is sufficiently systematic and transparent to enable the reader to judge the validity of the analysis.

A detailed analysis of the author's participatory involvement in this research illustrates the direct and indirect role this played in fostering in-depth and iterative knowledge generation. The author started as an auditor in the case study area and then switched to an expert consultant, combining both roles with her research mission. She is also a member of FSC International, part of the Russian national initiative and, since 2010,

serves on the board of directors of FSC-Russia. All of these multiple affiliations and functions facilitated her entrance to the field of study. Being a member of the FSC network gave her access to transnational processes, FSC general assemblies and the standard development working group; being a member of the FSC-Board in Russia allowed her to understand the dynamics on the national level of the FSC network. Her involvement as an auditor in many regions of Russia was useful for developing guides for interviews as it offered first hand experience of the pitfalls of the FSC elsewhere, giving a background and point of reference. In the case of the Segezha PPM certification, the author worked as an auditor in 2006 and observed audits in 2008-2010. This auditor role allowed deeper access to the field and analysis of the situation from the perspective of the company, e.g. to all company documents and company staff on different levels. In 2008-2012 the author, with colleagues at CISR, were involved in promoting citizen involvement on FSC certified territories, on the Segezha PPM lease. In 2013-2014 the study area was visited again, exclusively to update the research.

In addition to the insights gained from in-depth participant observation, a total of 322 interviews were performed during the years 2006 to 2014, including follow up interviews with some of the same informants. The respondents interviewed included 39 company representatives, 29 NGOs, and 36 representatives of local administrations as well as 21 other respondents including community activists, teachers, librarians, museum workers and local citizens in 9 villages. Interviews were focused on gaining a general understanding of the case study area, examining the interaction between the company and local community, and identifying the interests of local actors and their attitudes and experiences related to FSC certification. Semi-structured interviews were designed with interview guides, developed for different kinds of stakeholders in a manner allowing for two way conversations around each of the questions specified in the guide. Open-ended interviews were also conducted on several occasions: in early stages of exploratory research, and as follow up with key informants with whom semi-structured interviews were previously done.

A total of 11 field expeditions were carried out, varying in length from two weeks to one and one half months. The field expeditions involved participant observations, interviews and focus groups. Multiple visits were made to Petrozavodsk, the regional center Medvezhegorsk, Segezha, Padani, Shalgovari, Maslozero and other small settlements in Zaonezhie. In addition, participant observation was performed at four FSC General Assemblies in 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014, at FSC-Russia board meetings, and at FSC working groups in Russia and at the international level.

Each year the interviews were transcribed and coded and stored in a database. For this paper, the field materials were revisited and re-coded as needed to identify insights relevant to the GGN and Equity frameworks.

4 The case study: national and local context

The implementation of forest certification in Russia has occurred at a time of rapid social and political change. Since the late 1990s and 2000s, Russian federal policy has focused strongly on fostering economic growth (Mol 2009). This path has become apparent in all resource extracting industries and especially in the forest sector. At the same time, there has been a lack of cohesion among different divisions of government which has been further complicated by shifting jurisdictions. Forest management

structures in the period of 2000-2014 survived through six reorganizations, which were designed in favour of large corporate interests.

In the 2000's, large holding companies have purchased wood processing factories in Europe and pulp and paper mills (PPM) in Russia and transformed into Transnational Corporations (TNCs) of Russian or foreign origin (Olsson 2008). The Investlesprom holding company (INP), of Russian origin, purchased many other holdings in Russia and abroad. Conversely, many Russian companies were purchased by foreign TNCs; for example, Siktivkar Pulp and Paper Mill become part of Mondi Business Paper, Ilim Pulp was transformed into the Ilim Group belonging to International Paper. These large TNC's absorbed many of the smaller, locally-based enterprises, shifting the locus of company control from local to regional, national and international levels.

This trajectory is clearly illustrated by our case study firm, Investlesprom holding company (INP). INP was formed in 2006 as the result of purchasing and incorporating pulp and paper mills (PPMs), saw mills and logging enterprises under the umbrella of the group. The Forest Resources division incorporates logging enterprises in the Republic of Karelia, Archangelsk, Kirov, and Vologda regions. This paper focuses on the territory belonging to the lease of Segezha PPM, a subsidiary of INP, established as early as 1939 and specializing in the manufacturing of paper bags. The Segezha PPM was privatized in 1992. After Perestroika, the businesses, as well as the state entities, were permanently reorganized, and the Segezha PPM changed its ownership and name several times.¹ In 1999-2008, the Segezha PPM purchased many logging enterprises in order to ensure a constant resource supply. The holding company bought up all available enterprises with short term forest land leases.² The newly acquired companies went through bankruptcy procedures and in due course resumed their work under new names under the control of the holding company.³ Gradually, on the expiration of their short-term lease contracts for logging, the holding company took over the lease contracts and acquired companies became subsidiaries of the holding. During a process of modernization in 2008-2009, most workers were fired and the rest became employees of INP. As a result, the Segezha PPM received a 49 year lease contract for 1.8 million ha in its own name, but the decision making power over subsidiaries and revenues were controlled by INP. That is, the accounting system was gradually transferred to the INP Moscow office, top managers from Segezha PPM moved to INP headquarters in Moscow and took up leading positions. These managers guided the further reorganization and modernization of INP subsidiaries and Segezha PPM within them.⁴

[Insert Figure 3 The INP in Karelia]

Figure 3 INP holding company in Karelia (Northern Logging company was a subsidiary of INP logging on the lease of Segezha PPM, which is a subsidiary of INP).

From the perspective of social equity, a key result of these INP mergers has been the disappearance of locally-based forest enterprises. At the same time, local communities have also experienced a loss of social services formally provided by state-owned

¹ Interview with the top manager of the resource branch at Segezha PPM.

² Interview with the manager at the office of forest resource directors at Segezha PPM, October 2006.

³ Interview with the bankruptcy manager, office of forest resource directors, October 2006.

⁴ Interview with INP top manager on forest resources, March 2010.

logging companies (lespromkhozes). The Soviet period in Russia was characterized by paternalistic relationships between logging enterprises and the forest settlements. State owned logging companies, in addition to being economic actors, served as substitutes for the government in providing services to local communities, including support of community infrastructure, housing, schools, kindergartens, libraries and cultural events (Pipponen 1999). Privatization of forest enterprises in the 1990s started the process of a gradual disconnect between the companies and local communities. Many elements of community infrastructure became the responsibility of the state, although privatized companies, responding to the expectations of local communities, continued their support to a lesser extent (Tulaeva and Tysiachniouk 2008; Tysiachniouk 2013). The formation of holding companies and the TNCs' involvement brought a major shift in logging company-community relationships. When local logging enterprises became subsidiaries of TNCs, they lost the power of decision making as well as the capability of financial management, which lead to their inability to provide support for local communities unless the support was approved by corporate management. Further disconnects came from the modernization of the forest industry, which started to contract with mobile logging brigades working with mechanized harvesters and forwarders, instead of providing employment to local communities (Kotilainen et al. 2008). Ineffective state social policies for the development of rural settlements, in combination with the disruption of logging company-community relationships, resulted in extremely disadvantaged forest-dependent communities (Sodor and Jarvela 2007).

The following sections examine how FSC certification of Segezha PPM was enacted within this broader environmental and social context. In particular we are interested in which actors, and at what scales, were most influential in interpreting the FSC international and Russian national standards and how this affected the equity of environmental and social outcomes.

5 Environmental Standards - HCVF

Our analysis of the enactment of environmental standards in the case of Segezha PPM focuses on Principle 9 of the FSC P&C concerning “high conservation value” (HCV) forests. We chose this Principle because it addresses an issue of core concern to many transnational and Russian environmental NGOs and hence illustrates the ways in which ENGOs may engage with certification processes on issues of high priority.

As discussed in Section 2, our focus here is on social equity and not environmental equity in its non-human sense. That is, we examine which stakeholders were involved in setting the parameters of how HCV forest standards would be interpreted, what the outcomes were in terms of actual stakeholder participation in identifying HCV forests (procedural equity), and whose interests were reflected in the environmental outcomes (distributive equity).

The formal parameters for the interpretation of HCV are articulated in FSC's Principle 9, which introduces and defines the concept, and outlines special requirements for the protection of HCV forests. Version 4 of the FSC P&C and supporting documents in operation during the field work for this case study outlined six different categories of HCV, which have since been incorporated into the current Version 5 of the FSC P & C. They are as follows:

Box 1 FSC's International Categories of HCV

- **HCV-1** Forest areas containing globally, regionally or nationally significant concentrations of biodiversity values
- **HCV-2** Globally, regionally or nationally significant large landscape level forest areas
- **HCV-3** Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened, or endangered ecosystems
- **HCV-4** Forest areas that provide basic services of nature in critical situations (e.g. watershed protection, erosion control)
- **HCV-5 and -6** Forest areas fundamental to meeting basic needs of local communities (e.g. subsistence, health) and/or critical to local communities' traditional cultural identity (areas of cultural, ecological, economic or religious significance identified in cooperation with such local communities)

The FSC Russian national indicators add to this a detailed national interpretation for the six HCV categories and outline the management approaches prescribed in each case.

Preceding and alongside this formal parameter-setting, Russian and transnational activists have been engaged in a wide range of “forums of negotiation” to conserve large swathes of relatively undisturbed, or “intact forest landscapes” (IFLs), around the world. Russia contains a particularly large area of IFLs that together are considered a critical world heritage (Lloyd 1999). Greenpeace International, for example, has lobbied over the last decade for stronger standards for the HCV-2 category (intact forest landscapes) with a special focus on the Congo Basin Amazon, Canada and Russia.⁵ Between 2012-2014, Greenpeace actively contested the quality of implementation of HCV-2 standards in Russia (Tysiachniouk 2009), and in 2014 the Russian branch of Greenpeace dropped its membership of FSC in order to pressure the FSC system from outside.⁶ In these ways, a Greenpeace advocacy coalition stretching from transnational spaces to local places exercised power and has exerted considerable pressure on the FSC to strengthen preservation of IFLs.

In our case study area of Karelia, Greenpeace had been campaigning for the protection of IFLs since the early 1990s (Tysiachniouk 2009, Yanitsky 2000, Tysiachniouk et. al 2006, Tysiachniouk and Resisman 2006). At that time, there was still active logging of forests determined by Greenpeace to be IFLs (Tysiachniouk, 2006). In order to make a case for their conservation, it was first necessary to conduct a major effort to institutionalize the concept of IFLs, which at that time was recognized by neither businesses nor state institutions. Greenpeace, together with other NGOs, organized

⁵ Participant observation at the HCV working group at FSC international, participant observation at the FSC-GA 2005, 2008, 2011, 2014.

⁶ Interview with Greenpeace-Russia forest policy officer, September 2014.

boycotts in Europe against the companies that bought Karelian timber. By a joint effort, the NGOs produced a complete map of all intact forest landscapes in Karelia as well as across all of Russia. The Karelia-based NGO SPOK partnered with Greenpeace to promote conservation of intact forests. Subsequently, along with confrontational actions, Greenpeace together with its partners began to rely increasingly on forest certification as an efficient mechanism for promoting activities aimed at preserving HCV forests (Tysiachniouk, 2012). It is through certification that SPOK became involved as an HCV consultant for companies leasing forests in Karelia.⁷

For the holding company, it was a strategic partnership: the managers of the company preferred to have radical NGOs as partners, rather than as opposition. This particularly concerned SPOK, as by that time this NGO had developed into a strong regional actor with considerable potential to influence businesses. For the holding company, mobilization of SPOK as an expert has become a 'path of least effort'.

The effectiveness of the regional NGO SPOK at local levels and its high potential as an agent of institutional change is a result, to a large extent, of its deep connections with transnational actors via networks involving NGOs such as Greenpeace and the Taiga Rescue Network and other actors. For example, the 'GAP-analysis' project⁸ is notable for its role in supporting the HCV concept through the creation of a grounded network uniting a range of NGOs, scientists and actors from other sectors. One of the purposes of this project is the creation of the 'Green belt of Fennoscandia,' consisting of a system of specially protected areas in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Russia. This effort attempts to establish that the Russian forests in the Karelian borderland are of particular international interest and are a priority area for study. Through its engagement with the GAP analysis and similar efforts, SPOK has gained support from respected international networking organizations that legitimize its efforts to preserve old growth intact forests.⁹

These external forums of negotiation in turn influence the strategies that Russian forest holdings pursue to achieve certification; it is now common practice for holdings in Russia to get NGOs involved as experts in designating and managing HCV forests. NGO coalitions have focused most of their attention on HCV-2 (IFLs).¹⁰ That is why INP, working in Karelia with the NGO SPOK, had to first face the task to designate and preserve IFLs. SPOK approached this issue in two ways: first, it demanded that the holding company sign a voluntary moratorium on harvesting within them, using the general Greenpeace maps; second, it involved SPOK as experts for a field study.¹¹ In this way, SPOK interpreted the FSC international criteria and the INP had to implement their interpretation.

⁷ Interview with SPOK president, October 2007.

⁸ GAP-analysis – the analysis of biodiversity elements distribution contributes to long-term management through identifying and conserving its sensitive and representative elements in a community. In our case, it is the project on biodiversity maintenance in the European North through creation of PAs networks.

⁹ Interview with the representative of Taiga Rescue Network, March 2008, with SPOK executive director, May 2009.

¹⁰ Participant observation at the FSC working group meetings in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010.

¹¹ Interview with SPOK executive director, activists, 2007, 2008, 2012.

Although in this situation SPOK acted as the company's expert in forest management certification and as the FSC- Russia authorized consultant, conservation of IFLs remained its mission and priority. Therefore, in many cases SPOK has also acted as a radical NGO, pressuring the company rather than working as a consultant on the company's behalf.¹² During the first two years of certification in 2006-2007, INP's partnership with SPOK was developing rather smoothly, as not many intact IFLs were revealed in these territories and there were no problems with their designation.

In the process of further inspections of leased areas, the problems with valuable ecosystems became more acute. SPOK found a new old-growth forest territory near the village of Maslozero (in the Padansky forest management unit). It was too small to be qualified as IFL, but could be categorized as HCV-3. The company intended to organize felling on this territory and had constructed a road. For both parties, the preservation of these territories became a topic of hard negotiations, which at once converted SPOK from an 'ideal partner' to 'acting opposition.' However, during the disputes and long discussions a reasonable compromise emerged.¹³

As the company expanded its territories, more and more 'arguable' plots of land appeared. As these new territories became affiliated with the company, they also were required to undergo certification. Among these new territories, was a logging enterprise in the Muezerskii region with an IFL. SPOK had fought for many years to protect this area of IFL. Thus once the holding company took possession of these territories, it became SPOK's opponent on the issue. In this dispute, leaseholders argued that in Soviet times these forests underwent resin tapping and consequently were doomed to die.¹⁴ SPOK refuted this argument, referring to the remoteness of the area: if tapping somehow had damaged the forest, the forest would have died out by then.¹⁵

Another example of SPOK's role in enacting the HCV concept through certification, relates to the territories leased in the Trans-Onega region (Zaonezhie). These territories have a special microclimate; they are geographically close to the Kizhi Island, which contains valuable historical and natural objects. The forests in these territories are referred to as HCV-2 and HCV-3. In 2010, some of these territories became a new arena for contestation and conflict between SPOK and INP, as the company by a mistake - a lack of coordination between subsidiaries¹⁶ - started logging forests in the area. Finally, when the company declared that they will not cut forests on planned reserves, the conflict was resolved which allowed the Megvezhegorskii LC to receive FSC certification in January, 2011. A new conflict arose in 2013, when the company moved into intact areas of Zaonegie forests. SPOK fought the company and the certificate was suspended. The company subsequently excluded part of Zaonegie forests from its lease. In 2014 when INP underwent a change of ownership, a new round of negotiations started between the company and SPOK.

All told, the above examples are only a few of the many complicated negotiations which drove SPOK's transformation from a company consultant to a radical NGO, ready to

¹² Interviews with the SPOK president in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2014.

¹³ Interview with INP top manager in 2007, interview with SPOK activists 2007, 2008.

¹⁴ Participant observation and informal communications during the Segezha PPM audit in 2008.

¹⁵ Interview with the executive director of SPOK in 2008.

¹⁶ Participant observation in Zaonezie, August 2010, villages in Zaonezie.

fight for the conservation of IFLs. From the perspectives of equity and power, there are a number of important observations to be made from this. The Russian NGO SPOK was guided by Greenpeace, an organization with considerable influence at the international level of the FSC, where it has actively lobbied for strengthening IFL policies. Greenpeace and its NGO coalitions at the international level supported stakeholders on the national and regional/district levels in highlighting the value of IFLs in Russia. The existence of this strong transnational, national and regional network of environmental NGOs (Henry 2010) promoting the conservation of IFLs resulted in their relatively strong levels of influence in setting the parameters of how HCV would be interpreted and implemented in Russia. At the same time, the outcome of this parameter setting was that the process of negotiating HCVs largely resembled a two way negotiation between NGOs and INP. There was little involvement of very local actors in negotiations around the preservation of IFLs.¹⁷ In many cases this may be due to limited local stake in IFL designation, given their location far from human occupation where few people are using the forest. However, it also may be owing to the limited opportunities these local actors have to engage with the FSC's transnational forums of negotiation. The end result or outcome is a lack of procedural equity for local actors in influencing decisions about HCV forests and the designation of HCVs that do not address local interests (distributive equity).

The role of state actors is also important to consider in the negotiation of HCV in the Russian context. Voluntary moratoriums, such as those negotiated between SPOK and INP, have an uncertain future; company priorities and ownership may change, as may the broader economic and political climate. SPOK did manage to partially address this issue, by fostering inclusion of the IFLs and valuable ecosystems in Karelia's territorial planning scheme.¹⁸ In this way each of the territories has a chance to become a specially protected area—in this case becoming excluded from the company lease and protected by governments. The process of designating the specially protected areas also affords local communities greater opportunities to engage in parameter-setting regarding the management of HCV, in that state regulations require consultations with villagers and approval of the local deputy councils. It is through these state processes that SPOK has also gotten engaged in negotiating with local communities about the value of IFLs. In 2014 the process of designation and consultations continues. At the time of finalizing this paper (May 2015), people in Maslozero rejected a proposed new forest reserve, while in some other areas communities have approved them. The combination of the FSC-related processes with Russian state processes, has thereby improved the involvement of very local stakeholders in decision making regarding HCVs. In other words, the implementation of FSC by itself appears to have fostered relatively closed, two-way negotiations between NGOs and companies. The involvement of the state, in contrast, has enhanced procedural equity for communities in the form of participation in decision-making and distributive equity in the form of better reflecting community interests in the designation of protected areas.

¹⁷ Interviews and participant observation and interviews in Zaonegie villages, August, 2010.

¹⁸ Interview with SPOK executive director in 2010.

6 Social Standards—Community participation and benefit-sharing

The concepts of community participation in, and local benefit from, forest management are also an integral part of the FSC P&C. The requirements related to these objectives that are articulated in the former P&C Version 4 are of a relatively general and non-prescriptive nature. These have since been strengthened in the current Version 5 standard. Nevertheless the Russian national indicators, which are still based on Version 4, had already adopted some relatively strong language in these issue areas which, in turn, have been liberally interpreted by social activist organizations within Russia.

Firstly, the Russian standard includes a relatively comprehensive definition of “indigenous” that is based more on cultural self-identification and traditions of natural resource use than the relatively narrow legal definition of “small-numbered indigenous peoples” codified in Russian law (FSC-Russia 2012: Annex F). This has very important implications for parameter-setting because the rights of indigenous peoples are strongly defended within Principle 3 of the P&C. In regards to requirements for community participation, i.e. procedural equity, the Russian indicators state equal rights for indigenous peoples and all “local communities” (see note under Indicator 3.1.2 (I 3.1.2)¹⁹ of the FSC-Russia standard). Distributive equity is also addressed through a number of different criteria. Certified operations are expected to consult with local communities about activities that impact their livelihoods and traditional practices (Tysiachniouk and Meidinger 2012) and to ensure their livelihoods are not harmed (see various indicators under Principles 3 and 4). Operators are also expected to give employment priority to local people, help maintain the social infrastructure of forest villages, and help communities increase their quality of life (I 4.1.1, 4.1.5, 4.1.6 respectively). Principle 5 calls for supporting local markets, albeit only “if economically feasible” (I 5.2.2, 5.4.2) and defends local access to non-timber forest resources (I 5.5.9). In addition, the categories of HCV-5 and -6 call for the protection of locally important forests, thus potentially linking local priorities into the international networks surrounding the HCV concept.

If one considers all of these written requirements together, it would appear that the FSC-Russian standards would afford local communities a very strong voice in forestry decision-making and relatively equitable access to local forest resources. However, an analysis of how these requirements were interpreted in the INP site of FSC implementation reveals the importance of forums of negotiation in shaping actual on-the-ground outcomes.

Just as SPOK played a critical role in negotiating HCVs, another Russian NGO, the Center for Independent Social Research (CISR), was heavily involved in the application of social standards to the INP case. As described in the methodology section of this paper, several CISR staff, including one of the authors of this paper, were engaging with the FSC on social issues at multiple scales.

However the CISR, unlike SPOK, was not backed by an organized network of transnational NGOs campaigning and setting the parameters for the strong

¹⁹ Here and henceforward “I” followed by a number “x.x.x” refers to correspondingly numbered indicators in the FSC-Russia standard.

implementation of social standards under the FSC, as was the case with the environmental NGOs campaigning for IFLs. Instead, the CISR acted more as an individual social entrepreneur leveraging more limited resources to strengthen FSC implementation (Tysiachniouk 2010). The CISR attempted to tackle numerous barriers to the implementation of the FSC-Russian social standards in the INP case, with varying success.

The first set of barriers related to community participation, i.e. the enhancement of procedural equity for communities. This included a general disempowerment and a lack of belief among the local population that their suggestions will be taken into account, originating from the lingering effects of the Soviet past. The second barrier also originated from the Soviet past, and involved a high expectation that the company could play the role of the State and provide for significant community infrastructure. Thirdly, the modernization and restructuring of the forest industry reduced the number of workers employed by INP, which created additional tensions within the local communities²⁰.

Promoting public participation was a high priority for the CISR, as is evident from the INP case. Among the strategies used by the CISR, was to register with the FSC as authorized consultants and thereby gain an international voice. As members of the FSC office, they participated in compiling the Russian national FSC standard regarding social aspects of certification. This created opportunities for them to field test methods of implementing standards in local sites of implementation. As part of this initiative, CISR gave recommendations to INP about the most efficient way to organize working with stakeholders (Malets, Tysiachniouk 2009). They also explored local initiatives and projects which could help the company comply with FSC requirements through financial support in the form of small grants.

The HCV concept, a concept already well developed by transnational environmental NGOs, proved a fruitful venue for promoting public participation as well. INP had allocated logging plots near a village Tunguda prior to the public hearings and the process of designating HCV-5-6 forests, i.e. forests of special value to local communities. The Karelian social NGOs Trias and Young Karelia, and seasonal residents from Moscow who had bought houses in the village, joined with village residents to protect the forest near the village. Stakeholder interaction was mediated by an expert from the CISR; HCV 5-6 were designated, and ultimately, the stakeholders started cooperation with the company in forest management near the village.²¹

The implementation the FSC social standards addressing distributive equity, such as protection of local livelihoods, provision of social infrastructure, and promotion of local employment, were not equally successful. Incorporation of the formerly independent logging companies into the INP inevitably entailed a changed relationship with the local population. The affiliation of these former individual logging enterprises with the holding company has ruptured the regular course of relationships between the

²⁰ Interviews with the company top manager in 2008, 2009, 2011, multiple interviews with citizens in the villages, participant observation in the villages.

²¹ Participant observation during the audit, interview with the NGO Trias activist in May 2010, participant observation, in the village Tunguda in 2010-2011, participant observation during the company-community negotiations, June 2011.

enterprises and the local citizens. The holding is focused on maximizing profits and carrying out modernization of production. This inevitably entailed dismissal of some of the workers from the enterprise, although the living standard of those who remained was raised. Settlements where enterprises were utterly ruined and closed were the worst hit by such reorganization: the holding company in such cases employed contractors, and the local population was left without their former support for infrastructure maintenance. The situation in settlements where local people still worked at the operating enterprises was somewhat easier. Larger settlements, which had the status of regional centers, had more opportunities to both defend their rights through the higher state structures, and to require support from the holding company. Villages, which existed on these lands even before the logging companies were founded, underwent less noticeable changes because of traditional rustication: due to well-developed personal subsistence plots people were, to a lesser extent, dependant on the enterprise.

The issue of access to wood resources, which is part and parcel of FSC, was also a challenge. The supply of firewood and sawn timber for the local population was traditionally arranged by the logging enterprises in both Soviet and post Soviet times. After the merging of logging enterprises with the holding company, almost all of the woodlands of the region were included in the leased area of the company's structural divisions. By that time, the entire lease belonged to Segezga PPM and there was no room for small businesses who would supply the population with fire wood and sawn timber. Previously, smaller companies operated in the marketplace alongside the larger timber companies, allowing citizens to choose where to buy wood. These small companies created competitive conditions that regulated the prices for firewood and sawn timber. In Karelia, however, the holding—due to circumstances related to its lease—became a monopoly in the wood business. The company was not interested in supplying the population with firewood and sawn timber. As a result of modernization and technical re-equipping of production means, the INP cut timber to pieces of required size on the spot and hauled them directly to the final destination, without temporary storage at a transit timber yard. As a result, local transit timber yards were closed and torn down. This reduced the number of jobs and the ability of local people to access firewood and sawn timber.

However in the context of FSC certification, the CISR was able to assist the holding company in partially reviving traditional Soviet practices of local wood provision. CISR worked with the company to develop a mechanism for supplying wood to the local community, albeit at higher prices.²² Despite these efforts, the wood supply mechanism was never implemented since the community did not submit the required paper requests to the company.

In sum, the overall affect of FSC certification on local welfare and distributive equity was minimal. For most of the local population, certification did not provide any notable increase in material welfare or other measurable benefits. However, due to the actions undertaken by the CISR and the holding company in compliance with FSC requirements for HCV designation, procedural equity did improve for the local population; they began to participate in new ways in forestry decision-making, an arena

²² Participant observation in Padani, Shalgovari, 2010-2014.

that was formerly the prerogative of experts and international environmental NGOs alone.

7 Conclusion

This paper has combined the GGN and Equity frameworks as means to better understand how power is enacted in the local implementation of an international certification scheme. The GGN frame renders more visible the role of transnational and national networks, both internal and external to the FSC, in shaping how formal certification standards and procedures are governed as well as how they are interpreted and enacted in particular on-the-ground “sites of implementation”. The Equity framework, in turn, highlights the relatively weak position of the FSC’s social chambers at the international and Russian national levels, and of most community actors at the local level, in setting the parameters of what FSC certification does, and doesn’t address. It furthermore examines the equity of certification outcomes, distinguishing between equity of process, e.g. the degree to which communities are able to participate in designating HCV forests, and distributive equity, i.e. the ability of communities to share in the benefits of forest production.

The case study analysis focused, in particular, on FSC Russian standards for the protection of High Conservation Value (HCV) forests, community participation and local benefit-sharing and how these were implemented in the case of INP’s certification in the Republic of Karelia. This case highlights how FSC’s requirements for the protection of HCV forests were supported by strong and sustained transnational environmental networks, stretching from the node of design to the site of implementation, working both inside and outside of the FSC system. These networks were simultaneously engaged in international campaigns targeting European buyers of Russian wood products and monitoring FSC performance in the sites of implementation. The focus of these campaigns was mostly on IFLs and FSC was elicited as a tool to ensure the protection of IFLs. This generated demand for FSC certification among European buyers of Russian wood products. Thus, in the case of INP, the company elicited the help of a Russian NGO and partner of Greenpeace, known as SPOK, to help them successfully meet FSC requirements for the protection of HCV forests.

Equivalent multi-level networks were lacking for the FSC’s social standards. However the implementation of social priorities in the INP case was nevertheless strengthened by the presence of a Russian social NGO, the CISR, which leveraged their involvement in FSC at the international and national level to proactively push for local community participation and the promotion of community benefits from certification. Even with the extra efforts of this NGO, however, the impact of certification on the distribution of material benefits to local communities was minimal. In particular, certification failed to address local community concerns over the loss of small and medium forest enterprises, the high price of fuelwood, and loss of local access to sawnwood and building materials.

The CISR arguably achieved its greatest success in promoting local community participation, i.e. procedural equity, by leveraging the HCV concept for social as well as environmental ends. This leverage was catalyzed by the concern of local villagers and seasonal residents from Moscow about logging near a local village. In this case, and with the help of the CISR, local community members were able to leverage FSC

certification to designate these forest areas as areas of high social value and thereby protect them from logging.

These case study findings may, or may not, apply to other FSC certified forest areas. It is possible, for example, that other communities in other sites of implementation have succeeded in achieving significant material benefit from certification. What this single case study illustrates very clearly, however, is that the ability of global and national standards to affect on-the-ground change may depend very heavily on the presence of strong multi-scale advocacy coalitions able to ensure their effective and sustained implementation. It also highlights the need for more research on how certification is actually negotiated and implemented at multiple scales, and in highly diverse contexts worldwide.

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