

**Paper delivered for the ISSRM 2009:  
The 15. International Symposium on Society and Resource management, Vienna.**

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## **Meta-governance in the Living Forests process; implications for participation and legitimacy**

### ***Introduction***

In this paper we will investigate the path from meta-governance through participation to legitimacy. We look into the meta-governance measures in the Living Forests governance process for sustainable forest management in Norway, and what implications these measures have had on participation in and legitimacy of the process. Among all actors taking part in the process, the analyses in this paper is limited to the forest sector and the environmental organisations. We will argue that the focus on hands-off meta-governance measures led to a high degree of participation and legitimacy in the forest sector and increased participation with variable legitimacy among the environmental organisations.

We write this article in a Norwegian context where network governance has increasingly been working side by side with traditional government and representative democracy in different policy areas. Network governance has in this way become a new and fashionable way of coordinating private and public activities, giving way to innovative organisations, ideas and solutions in policy making. Studies show that this type of coordination, however may have its' limitations. It is, among other things, argued that policy making through governance networks has implications for traditional democratic values like openness, transparency and representativeness. In this way network governance may also have implications for legitimacy of policy making in general (Normann 2007).

Research on meta-governance is therefore necessary to understand and develop required skills to govern these networks. Such research will be of great interest both for policy makers – as distributors of benefits and burdens in society – and for the legitimacy of the political system as a whole. Researchers (Jessop 2003) point to the fact that to build knowledge about meta-governance it is necessary to build from empirical studies up. This is what we do, when we look into how the Living Forests governance process is meta-governed and which implications this has for the participation in and legitimacy of the process.

In the paper we use Sørensen and Løfgren's four ideal meta-governance strategies called "policy and resource framing", "institutional design", "network facilitation" and "network participation" to analyse the meta-governance strategies of the Living Forests process (Sørensen and Løfgren 2007). The ideal types are differing in relation to form and degree of involvement but are not mutually exclusive. Using their analysis as background we look into what implications these strategies seems to have had on participation in and subsequently the acceptance of the process in different stakeholder groups.

The analysis in the paper is based on the findings of the Living Forests case study in “New modes of Governance for Sustainable Forestry in Europe (GoFOR) (Ouff et.al. 2008).<sup>1</sup> The case study was carried out by combining two methodological approaches: 1. Document studies, including previous evaluations of aspects of the Living Forests Process. 2. 28 semi-structured interviews with representatives from forestry, political administration, environmental groups, other NGOs and science. The document studies served as an introduction to the field of Norwegian forest management in general and to the Living Forest Process in particular, while the interviews were used to validate and to further investigate the initial findings as well as to follow up interesting patterns.

## The Living Forests Process (1995- 2006)

To contribute to a full understanding of the meta-governance measures and their implications in the Living Forests, we present an overview over the course of the process. For a complete picture, we refer to Ouff et al 2008. Figure 1 sum up the activities of the process chronologically.

1994	The forest owners and industry came together and formed the <i>Trade project on forestry and environment</i> , strongly encouraged by the Ministry of Agriculture. <sup>2</sup>
1995-98	A wide range of organisations were invited into the process, now named Living Forests. The actors worked on reality orientation and negotiations on the first set of the Living Forests Standards (LF <sup>98</sup> ).
1998-2000	The forest owners and industry developed a group certification system based on the LF-standards, much to the ENGOs’ discontent. Collaboration was practically non-existing in this period.
2000-01	Most of the actors from the LF <sup>1995-98</sup> project came together to redefine and specify some of the standards they did not agree upon in the aftermath of the LF <sup>98</sup> . The agreement was signed in May 2001.
2002	No specific co-operation took place.
2003	The original actors from LF <sup>1995-98</sup> came together to revise the LF <sup>98</sup> -standards. They agreed to carry out three different evaluations, which later formed the foundation for the revision. One of the ENGOs stepped out of the co-operation.
2004	The evaluations were presented. A couple of new actors were invited in, of which some turned the invitation down and some accepted.
2005-06	Negotiations were completed and resulted in a new set of consensus based claims. The final LF <sup>2006</sup> Standard was signed in October 2006 and the Living Forests Council was established.

**Figure 1 An overview of the Living Forests project and process.**

The Living Forests process is identified as a quite successful governance process for sustainable forest management in Norway (Ouff et al 2008, Ouff 2009). It was successful both in establishing forest management standards (the Living Forests Standards), establishing a permanent cooperative council (The Living Forests Council) and in building new relations between different stakeholders in forest management.

The inter-sectoral co-operation process took place between stakeholders from forestry, environmental and outdoor recreational NGOs, trade unions, consumers’ organisations and the government. The main objective was and is to achieve and document sustainable forestry in Norway. The project was triggered by the demands for documentation on sustainable timber especially from the German paper industry (Sæther 2000).

<sup>1</sup> GoFOR was funded by the European Commission under the Sixth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development.

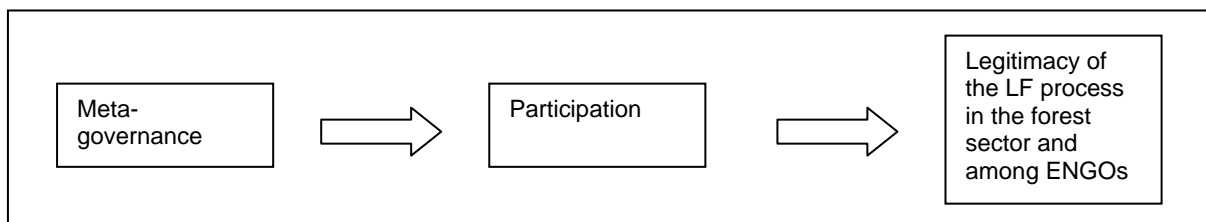
<sup>2</sup> Translated from Norwegian: *Bransjeprojektet for skog og miljø*. This project became a preliminary project to the Living Forests.

Our case study is dealing with one of the working groups in the LF<sup>1995-98</sup> project, called “WG2 Sustainable Forestry -criteria and documentation” and the aftermath of this until 2006. The discussion within WG2 was mostly concentrated on finding criteria, indicators and standards for sustainable Norwegian forestry (Arnesen et al. 2004).

After signing the document with the first set of Living Forests Standards in 1998, the process came to a halt. In 2001 the parties came back together, as they needed to detail some of the agreed 1998-standards. In 2003 they met again for a total revision of the 1998-standards (the LF<sup>2003-06</sup> revision). The revised Living Forests Standards<sup>2006</sup> was signed late autumn 2006, together with the establishment of the Living Forests Council. With the Living Forests Council the project is now transformed into a permanent co-operation between the 12 signing parties.

### **Meta-governance in the Living Forests process**

We base our analysis on a causal chain between meta-governance, participation and legitimacy of the output of the Living Forests process. Even though we are aware that other factors contributed to explain participation and legitimacy of the process, we believe there are causal connections between these factors in an INUS-conditional understanding of the word (Mackie 1975:16). In short, the meta-governance measures taken are insufficient but necessary parts of explaining participation in and in its turn legitimacy of the Living Forests process in the forest sector and within the ENGOS. The chain is visualized in Figure 2.



**Figure 2 A visualization of the causal chain from meta-governance via participation to legitimacy in the forest sector and among ENGOS.**

The first step will thereby be to analyze the meta-governance measures of the Norwegian government. Based on a review of theoretical and empirical literature on governance networks, Sørensen and Løfgren (2007) have pointed to four main categories of meta-governance of self-regulating governance networks. The four categories are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1 Forms of meta-governance.**

	<b>Limited intervention</b>	<b>Strong intervention</b>
<b>Hands-off</b>	Policy and resource framing	Institutional design
<b>Hands-on</b>	Network facilitation	Network participation

Sørensen and Løfgren have built up these categories to contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon meta-governance. The categories are not mutually exclusive and are, as our example will show, also strongly interconnected. They are in this way useful to illustrate the mix of meta-governance measures in a specific case. We will use the categories to understand and present the meta-governance measures in the Living Forests process and through this further contribute to building up a repertoire for “meta-governance” in different contexts. The categories will be more closely presented in each section below.

In the term meta-governance there is an inherent touch of intention more than coincidence. From our empirical findings we know that some of the meta-governance strategies chosen in the Living Forests process were intentional. We however are not in a position where we can conclude that all the measures taken to govern the governance network were intentional or part of a coherent strategy. Quite the contrary, some of the meta-governance measures we will put light to seem to be more on the coincidental side. This however does not affect the possible impact of the measures on participation and legitimacy of the process.

## **Policy and resource framing**

According to Sørensen and Løfgren (2007), policy and resource framing is hands-off meta-governance with limited intervention. This type of meta-governance is about “demarcation of political and financial conditions under which networks are granted autonomy to govern themselves” (Sørensen and Løfgren 2007:8). Political framing is about setting overall political goals and objectives for the governance networks. Resource framing is strongly related to this and takes, according to Sørensen and Løfgren, place through the allocation of a “specific amount of fiscal or administrative resources that the self-regulating networks are authorized to use”. We will in the following present how policy and resource framing was conducted in the Living Forests process.

Traditionally the Ministry of Agriculture, the process industry and the forest owners’ organisations formed a triangle of dominant actors in the forest sector. Non-economic stakeholders such as environmental organisations, outdoor recreation organisations etc, were not included in the decision making processes. The forest owners and the forest industry, together with the Ministry of Agriculture were the sole actors in setting up the goals of the project. But even though the actors of the traditional “triangle” set up the rules of the game, the Living Forests project marked a break with this tradition.

To make involvement and cooperation from different stakeholders possible the Norwegian government “depoliticized” a zone in which the process could unfold by different means: a) The Ministry of Agriculture (now the Ministry of Agriculture and Food) postponed the revision of the Forest Act until the Living Forests<sup>1995-98</sup> project was completed, b) Questions on the preservation of forest areas or species that would result in demands for economic compensation from forest owners were left out as a negotiable topic in the process, and c) The government defined the process as more of a certification process, than a political one. Later the parliament also postponed the regulation on sustainable forestry, to await results from the LF-process.

The government also financed half of the Living Forests project. The budget (1995-1998) was NOK 30 mill, and the cost was divided between the forest owners, the forest industry (25% each) and governmental organisations (50%).<sup>3</sup>

The policy and resource framing had two consequences in our view; 1) A depoliticised zone was made where the process could unfold. 2) The government, represented by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture put themselves on the sideline and at the same time gave way for the remaining actors.

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<sup>3</sup> The Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture and the Norwegian Ministry of the Environment, the State-owned Bank of Agriculture, Statens Nærings-og Distriktsutviklingsfond and The Research Council of Norway

## **Institutional design**

Sørensen and Løfgren (2007) characterise institutional design as a strongly interventionist form of meta-governance but at a distance (hands-off). Institutional design within meta-governance is about designing the institutional conditions under which the network is to govern itself. Institutional design is the answers to questions like: Who is to participate? What kinds of competencies are important? What formal procedures should be followed? But it is also the incentive structures around the network and the construction of a storyline that shapes the perceptions of purpose, interests and collective points of identification (Sørensen and Løfgren 2007). The Norwegian government seems to have used many of these meta-governance measures in the Living Forests process. We will in the following emphasize the meta-governance measures strongly influencing participation and legitimacy of the process.

First and foremost, the government (together with the Forest owners and the Forest Industry) made some important decisions on institutional design before other stakeholders were invited into the process: The fiscal resources were channelled through the Forest Owners' Federation and the secretariat of the process was also localized and managed by the same organisation.

Secondly, as main contributor of fiscal resources to the Living Forests project; the government demanded that the forest sector cooperated with ENGOs along the process. Interestingly, however, the government made few demands on degree and form of participation by these organisations. Traces of this passive role are found all along the process. The Ministry of Agriculture suggested that the ENGOs should be able to meet and have a right to vote in the steering committee of the Living Forests <sup>1995-1998</sup> project. This did not come through, due to the high level of conflict between the parties within the forest sector and the ENGOs. Another example is how some actors were invited to take part, but had too little fiscal or administrative resources to do so. The government chose not to enable them to take part by funding their participation.

A less visible, but nevertheless important part of the government's institutional design, is the story-line produced along the process. The discourse on Living Forest and sustainable forestry was upheld by the government as a story about a proactive forest industry, continuously working towards improving sustainability in forestry.

The institutional design of the Norwegian government in this way has contributed to two important features of the process: 1. The Forest Owners, and with them the "old" power base of forestry stayed in control of the development. 2. Even so, the environmental organisations and other NGO's were allowed to enter the negotiation table.

## **Network facilitation**

Governance networks are based on voluntary participation. Each actor can leave the network if the costs of taking part exceed the benefits. With such negotiated cooperation between autonomous actors follows free rider challenges, transaction costs and challenges connected to building trust between the participants. The meta-governor can help the networks overcome these challenges. Strategies to achieve this can range from initiating a network via arranging contacts and giving administrative support, to trust building between actors. Sørensen and Løfgren (2007) call this kind of meta-governance "network facilitation". They characterise it as a hands-on strategy, but the intervention is still limited. The Norwegian government's role as a network facilitator changed during the process. We will have a closer look at how.

Discussions between the actors in forestry and governmental bodies laid the foundation for the Living Forests<sup>1995-98</sup> project; however, already early in the project phase, the ministries stepped back from their active role and went into observing roles in the steering committee. Since the Living Forests' secretariat was both in the LF<sup>1995-98</sup> and during the LF<sup>2003-06</sup> revision placed within the Forest Owners' Federation, the facilitation of the process was in the hands of the forest owners. During the first project period the secretariat consisted of up to 12 people.

The ministries in this way handed the network facilitator role to one of the strongest negotiating parties, and did not to a large extent act as a facilitator after the initial phase. We have observed this passive role also in several other incidents. For example the Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature (NNV) withdrew from the process in 2003. Also the WWF had a break around 2000, when the ENGOs and the forest sector did not agree on the interpretation of the standards. Seemingly the government did not use its' position to rebuild trust between the parties on these occasions.

This way of organising the project was controversial. Since the secretariat became strongly connected to one of the sides, there were disputes and discussions both in LF<sup>1995-98</sup> and at the start of the revision whether this was a fair way to organise the project or not. The criticism was not levelled at particular persons, but showed a disagreement with the organisational setup as such (Arnesen et al. 2004).

As a conclusion, after the initial phase, the government did not seem to act as a network facilitator even when the chances and the circumstances could have required such a role. Quite the opposite, the government placed this facilitating role into the hands of the stronger parties: the forest owners in general, and the Forest Owners' Federation in particular.

## **Network participation**

Sørensen and Løfgren (2007) argue that network participation by the meta-governor is both a way to influence the network and a way to obtain insight on the impact of their varying meta-governance measures. The Norwegian government has, in the Living Forests process, used direct participation as a meta-governance measure, but has in our view made this potential hands-on category into more of a hands-off measure. There are three factors that contribute to this interpretation from our side.

Firstly, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment have in the decisive negotiations throughout the process been participating in the governance networks but without the right to vote. This role seems from the outside to give a picture of a government not interested in having a say in governing the process. Our data give no indication that this first impression has been countered by a particularly active interpretation of their observer's role.

Secondly, on the whole, the Living Forests Process was defined as a certification process by the ministries from the beginning, and in this way was made into more of a technical matter than a political one. As a result of this, the Ministry of the Environment in 1995 chose to use a representative from the Directorate for Nature Management in the negotiations. The argument for this was that the representative should have expertise within the field. This shift of representation downwards in the governmental hierarchy can also be interpreted as a move away from network participation as an active meta-governance strategy towards a supportive role in the process.

Thirdly the two ministries have only to a limited degree been coordinated. This has its' reference point in the general picture of forest management in Norway. Nationally the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has authority over forestry in general while the Ministry of the Environment has authority over certain aspects of Forestry such as pollution, securing biodiversity, securing public access to recreational areas etc. In addition the Ministry of Industries has authority over important issues concerning regulating competition in the forest industry. This fragmentation of authority is further strengthened by cultural cleavages between the Ministry of Agriculture and Food and The Ministry of the Environment. The division of labour, authority and culture was not compensated for by extensive coordination in the negotiations.

Whether the role played by the government reflected a conscious and deliberate strategy, we don't know. The outcome was either way that there was given way for other participants to take a leading role, in what traditionally was within the Ministries' control.

### **Hands-off measures dominated meta-governance in the Living Forests**

The government had several meta-governance measures in play in the Living Forests process. The most decisive meta-governance measures, however, can be characterised as "hands off". We base this conclusion on three main findings:

1. *Policy and resource framing:* The government made from the start and also throughout the process an explicit, depoliticised framework within which the process could unfold. Financed half of the project through the forest owners' organisations.
2. *Institutional design:* The secretariat was placed within the Forest Owners' Federation, demanding that the environmental organisations were to be involved, but few demands were made on how.
3. *Network facilitation and participation:* Even when choosing these potentially hands-off strategies, the government chose passive approaches.

The meta-governance measures we have chosen to highlight in the preceding text are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2 Meta-governance measures used by the Norwegian government.**

	<b>Limited intervention</b>	<b>Strong intervention</b>
<b>Hands-off</b>	<p><b>Policy and resource framing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “Opened up” a depoliticized zone within which the Living Forests process could unfold by: postponing the Forest Act, postponing the Regulation on Sustainable Forestry and defining sensitive issues out of the process.</li> <li>- Defined the LF as a certification process, and by that put themselves on the sideline and gave way for the remaining actors.</li> <li>- Financed half of the project.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Institutional design</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Channelled the financial resources through the Forest Owners’ Federation and accepted that the secretariat was placed within the organisation.</li> <li>- Demanded that the forest sector and the ENGOs cooperated, but did not direct how.</li> <li>- Did not interfere with the design of the process (tried, but had defined themselves out as an active formal partner.)</li> <li>- Supported the production and maintenance of “the story of the proactive forest sector for sustainable forestry”.</li> </ul>
<b>Hands-on</b>	<p><b>Network facilitation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Took part in initiating the process</li> <li>- Then withdrew from the facilitator role.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Network participation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Were observers without the right to vote in different steering groups throughout the process.</li> <li>- Pushed the process forward, but did not intervene in negotiations on the solutions.</li> </ul>



## ***Implications for participation and legitimacy***

Participation is a complex and vague term. Writers have studied this phenomenon from very different angles. On the basis of Jürgen Habermas (1986), communicative action thinkers like Healey (1997, 1999 and 2003) and Amdam and Amdam (2000) emphasize that participation from a wide range of stakeholders improve planning processes. Arnstein (1969) shows also interest mainly in planning, and ranges participation from manipulation to citizen control, depending on different levels of decision making power among those who participate.

The range of participants in the initial Living Forests project was as we have seen quite broad - from forest industry organisations via the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Agriculture to representatives of the Sami parliament, NGOs on outdoor recreation and environmental issues to researchers in the field (see Ouff et al 2008 for further details). The degree of participation by different stakeholders, however, differed, and varied from being part of official hearings to hold decision making powers. When we in the following use the term *participation* we mean *possibilities to influence the process directly through representation in different steering- and working groups and through this, have decision making power*.

How then, can this in turn influence legitimacy? Max Weber's thoughts are the starting point for many studies of legitimacy. He defined legal authority as "a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands" (Weber 1968:215). David Beetham (1991) argues that Weber's understanding of legitimacy puts too much emphasis on belief and that this blurs other aspects of legitimacy. Beetham argues that political power is legitimate to the extent that:

- (a) it is acquired and exercised in accordance with the rules or the laws; and
- (b) the rules or laws embody an acknowledged principle of political authority, in terms of which they can be justified; and
- (c) there is evidence of expressed consent to authority on the part of those qualified to give it. (Beetham 1991)

Tiltnes (1994) adds another form of legitimacy – legitimacy acquired by performance (d): Because rules of power exclude people from access to means of power, it is important for the rulers to satisfy some common interests. If a regime performs satisfactory according to its citizens, it will build legitimacy. Lipset (1959:90) expresses almost the same claiming that legitimacy and effectiveness are two sides of regime stability.

Beetham, Lipset and Tiltnes are mainly concerned with regime legitimacy. Our concern is, however, the legitimacy of the Living Forests process among the forest sector and the ENGOs. We are also mainly focusing on the connection between participation and legitimacy. This leads us to whether the forest owners and the ENGOs acknowledge the rules and procedures of the Living Forests process (b) and/or whether the results of the process give legitimacy to the process (d). We call the two types of legitimacy "procedural legitimacy" and "legitimacy by performance".

In the following discussion, our point of departure will be three questions: 1) To what extent has the meta-governance measures influenced participation in the forest sector and the ENGOs within the Living Forests process? 2) To what extent has participation influenced procedural legitimacy within the same groups? 3) To what extent has the performance of the process (the Living Forests Standards, the certification process and the establishment of the Living Forests council) contributed to legitimacy by performance in the same groups?

## Implications of policy and resource framing

As described above, there was a thorough demarcation of the field within which the process was to unfold. Very sensitive issues, like the preservation of forest areas and species, were left out of the process. This made a depoliticized zone where the actors could exert real influence without “interference” from representatives from representative democracy – the politicians. As far as we know, the Living Forests process was never an object of heated political debate whether within political circles or in the public. Still, when the revised Forest Act was passed in 2005, it was clearly influenced by the Living Forests. The revision was originally postponed just to give the Living Forests process free rein. Also the impact the Living Forests made on several other regulations and reports from the Norwegian government the following years indicate that the process was accepted as legitimate also within the representative political system.<sup>4</sup>

This *policy and resource framing* had different implications for participation and legitimacy within the forest sector and among the ENGOs. According to the actors in the Living Forests Process, this depolarisation was of great importance to motivate especially the forest industry, forest organisations and foresters themselves to engage in the Living Forests process and commit to the work and the decisions made. For economic reasons, the actors in the forest sector had particular interests in the cultivated and commercial parts of the forests. The fact that this field of interest became depoliticised made the incentives for participation even stronger. The high degree of motivation among the forest owners is shown by their many initiatives. For example the Forest Owners’ Federation held several meetings for its members throughout the process to discuss issues on sustainable forestry and to inform about the Living Forests standards. The organisation also arranged courses for forest entrepreneurs. The latter is important because of the ownership structure in Norway. For a large part, forest properties are small family holdings with small-scale forest operations. A lot of the forest owners engage entrepreneurs to manage the forests on their behalf. Without the forest owners’ and forest entrepreneurs’ voluntary compliance with the norms and rules for sustainable forestry, the effects of the Living Forests standards on forest management stood in danger of being marginal.

Generally the ENGOs did not consent on the framework of the negotiations laid by the Norwegian government through policy and resource framing, and it caused turbulence within the environmental groups. Their stand was that the full range of environmental issues should be part of the negotiations, since they were all an integral part of a move towards sustainable forestry. Most strongly this view was expressed by the Norwegian society for the Conservation of Nature (NNV). In the end, this led to the exit of the NNV from the process.

The fact that a depoliticized space was created seems then to have secured and increased motivation for participation and through this procedural legitimacy and legitimacy by performance within the forest sector. Still, the forest sector needed the ENGOs to take part to secure trustworthiness of the process in a national and international setting. The narrow space laid open for negotiations was, however, controversial among the environmental organisations. This probably influence participation directly (see next section) and lowered procedural legitimacy among the ENGOs in general.

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<sup>4</sup> This applies for example to the Act of 2005-05-27 nr 31; *Act on forestry* (the Forestry Act), FOR nr 593: Forskrift om bærekraftig skogbruk (*Regulations on sustainable forestry*), *White Paper No. 17 (1998-99) Value Shaping and Environment – Potentials in forestry*.

It's worth noticing also that with the depoliticized zone created through the policy framing by the two ministries in the Living Forests process, all stakeholders in the Living Forests process still had a quite high level of influence on the subject matter.

## **Implications of institutional design**

The institutional design ensured that two of the strong parties in Norwegian forest policies, *the forest owners and the industry*, remained strong, and that the forest owners perhaps became even stronger than before. Through control of the secretariat, the forest owners and the industry were given the overall definition power in the process and became the driving force of the LF<sup>1995-98</sup> project and of the following process. They were able, not only to control participation by other stakeholders, but also strongly influence type and scale of knowledge production. This knowledge production was allegedly biased in favour of the forest sector, which in turn lowered both procedural legitimacy and legitimacy by performance of the process among the ENGOs.

The institutional design, on the other hand, also had a democratising effect. Traditionally, the strong triangle-like policy making arena in forest management, would include the forest owners' organisations, the government and the forest industry. The Living Forests project also started out with only these three parties of interest. The process, however, ended up making an important break with this tradition. The environmental organisations, and also other groups, were allowed directly into decision making in forestry.

Probably, we can not solely give the meta-governance strategies credit for this change of actors. The international market pressures on the forest industry created the need to document that Norwegian forestry was sustainable. This made actors like the environmental organisations indispensable for the industry to reach their economical goals. The environmental organisations were therefore armed with market power in the Living Forests negotiations. This way we can say that the process has had a democratising effect and represents an important break with the earlier tradition in forest policy making. One interesting point, however, is that the market-imposed pressure was also put on the industry in other countries. Still, the reaction towards this pressure, in for instance Germany, was almost the opposite of the Living Forests process; the government and the forest industry tightened the bonds within themselves even more. (Ouff et al 2008).

By not interfering more deeply in the institutional design of the project, however, the government allowed grossly unequally distributed decision making power to develop. For example the steering committee of the Living Forests project was made up of the traditionally strong actors in within the "forest-management triangle". The actors who were "new" to policy making in forest management, were left to participation in WG2 and the Advisory Board.

This skewed distribution of power in the process was disliked by all the environmental organisations, and lowered the procedural legitimacy of the process in these circles. It however led to two different reactions within the group, as the ENGOs showed different degrees of discontent with the institutional design. While the WWF and the SABIMA stayed on as partners in the process, the NNV left in 2003. This reflects also a disagreement between the environmental organisations on how best to reach their goals on sustainable forestry. While the WWF and SABIMA felt they could contribute to improve forestry little by little

from within the process (as compared to not at all), the NNV felt they were silenced as a part of the process and thus became a kind of hostage legitimizing something they could not answer for. Neither the Ministry of the Environment or the Ministry of Agriculture did anything to alter this imbalance of resources and thus power.

On the other hand, an institutional design giving too much power to the environmental organisations would probably have driven the forest industry and forest owners away. To add to the picture of a proactive forest sector, they see themselves as a driving force of what traditionally has been the sphere of the ENGOS and the Ministry of the Environment.

The institutional design of the process in this way seemed further to strengthen participation, procedural legitimacy and probably also legitimacy by performance in the forest sector, and especially among the forest owners. On the other hand, the institutional design split the group of ENGOS. While the WWF and SABIMA were able to live with the institutional design as long as the results were better than status quo, the NNV after some time felt that both the policy and resource framing and the institutional design made the process lopsided. The organisation also meant that the achievements for sustainable forestry were not sufficient to remain within the process. In this way, they claimed both that procedural legitimacy and legitimacy by performance were so low that it delegitimized the process all together.

### **Implications of network facilitation and network participation**

What we have seen above, is that the “hands-off” measures have had important consequences for participation and legitimacy of the process. The potentially more hands-on strategies in the process, like network facilitation and network participation, seem generally to have been conducted in a way that strengthened the impact of the hands-off strategies, i.e. policy and resource framing and institutional design.

While the Ministry of Agriculture’s role in initiating and financing the process was essential, the Ministry shortly after the first phase withdrew from a facilitating role, and this gave plenty of leeway to the forest owner’s organisations. With the governmental withdrawal, the forest owners’ organisations could avoid internal resistance within the organisations and motivate their own members to take part directly in discussions on sustainable forestry. This way, the governmental withdrawal increased participation, and both procedural legitimacy and legitimacy by performance among the forest sector. The picture is different among the ENGOS.

Our empirical studies show that the ENGOS and the non-participating organisations did not see the ministries as ambassadors for the weaker parties or as promoters of the common interests, as they expected (Ouff et. al. 2008). True, the government tried to influence which actors were let into the steering committee, but having put themselves on the sideline, they did not have the power to make sure their views came through.

Choosing roles as observers in the steering groups, the ministries’ network participation further underlined their withdrawal from their active role. With this choice the ministries made it clear to the forest sector, that this was in fact *their* process, and that the government had given up on their traditionally strong, hands-on policy making for sustainable forestry. Defining the Living Forests as a certification process was essential to make way for this withdrawal. Defining the process as political would in turn have demanded a more active role by the ministries.

### Conclusion

The hands-off meta-governance strategies of the Norwegian government in the Living Forests Process seem to have promoted participation in the effort to work towards sustainable forestry both in the forest sector and in the environmental organisations. While the change for the forest sector has been both in types of participation and on motivation to work towards sustainable forestry, the change for environmental organisations has mainly been one of increased direct influence.

The meta-governance strategies also seem, through participation, to have strongly strengthened the procedural legitimacy and legitimacy by performance of the Living Forests process in the forest sector. Procedural legitimacy and legitimacy by performance, however, differ among the environmental organisations. Still, only the NNV has chosen to leave the negotiations and consider both the procedures and the result of the process as illegitimate. The two other organisations represented in the steering group, WWF and SABIMA, see the flaw of the policy framing and the institutional setup. Still, they find that it will serve their interests better to stay within the process, than to leave the negotiations and their seat in the Council. Figure 3 below illustrates this and shows the path we have been following through this paper.

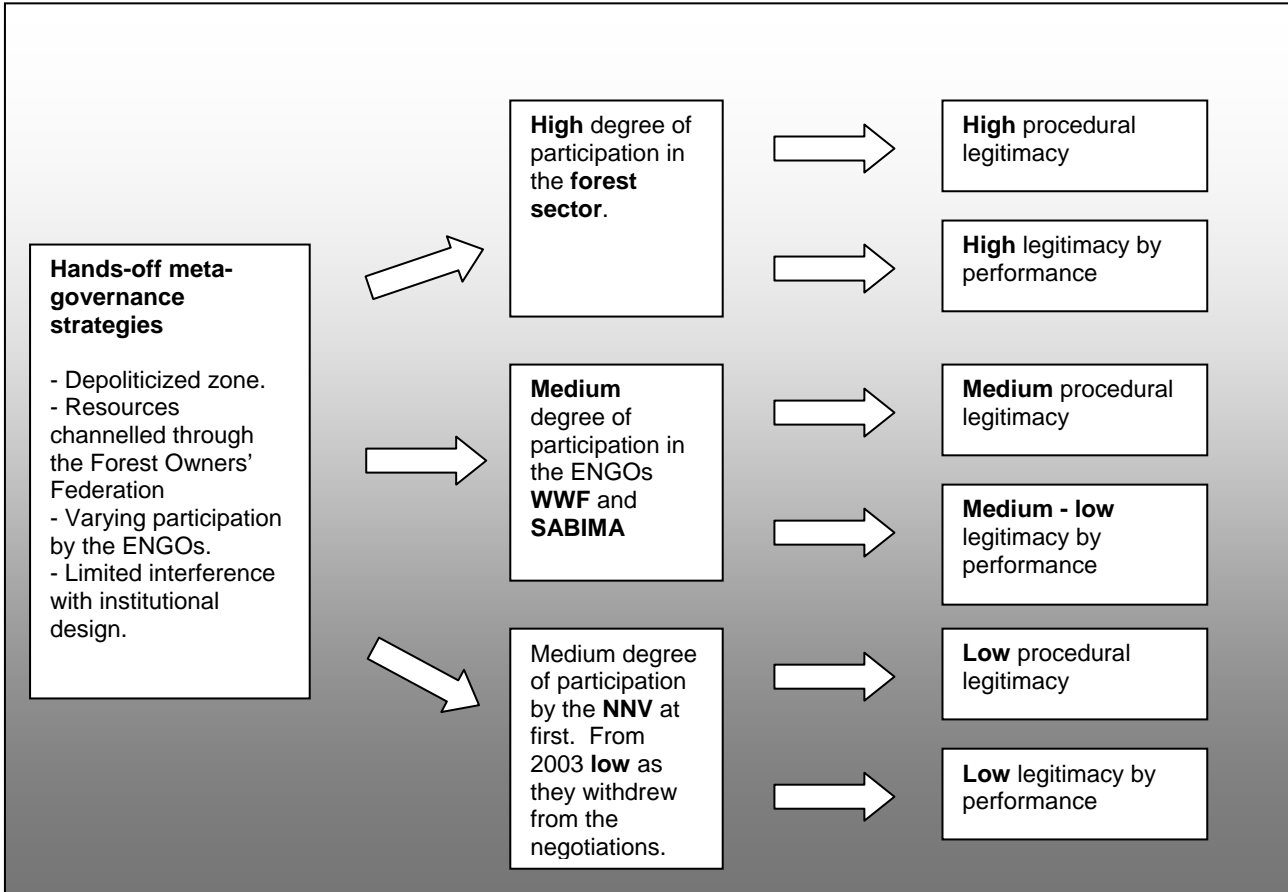


Figure 3: The path from meta-governance strategies through participation to legitimacy.

Meta-governance strategies made an impact on participation and legitimacy of the Living Forests process, and in turn for the sustainability of the forest sector. We are, however, not trying to argue that the same meta-governance strategies are the sole cause of participation and legitimacy in the Living Forests process. We are also not arguing that the same set of

meta-governance strategies will work in the same way in a different context. We join groups with Bob Jessop arguing that “building up a repertoire (for controllers and regulators) is, however, not a mere technical task, but a matter of being prepared for any contingencies.” We have in this study tried to give a contribution to this repertoire.

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### Abbreviations

LF	Levende Skog
SABIMA	Samarbeidsrådet for biologisk mangfold
NNV	Norges Naturvernforbund
NORSKOG	NORSKOG
NSF	Norges Skogeierforbund
WWF	

### English

Living Forests
Norwegian Biodiversity Network
The Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature
The Norwegian Forestry Association
The Norwegian Forest Owners' Federation
WWF Norway