

Democratic Legitimacy of the Forest Sector and Nature Conservation Decision-Making in Finnish Print Media Discussion

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The study explores perceived democratic legitimacy of forest-related decision-making processes in the Finnish print media discourse. The data consists of the readers' letters in four journals ($n=530$), and the comments given during the preparation of the Finnish National Forest Program ($n=140$).

The objective is to identify the patterns of democratic legitimacy and respective performance evaluations of actual decision-making processes. The patterns can be classified as support for: (A) democracy and other forms of government, (B) different forms of participation, and (C) principles of democracy. The principles can be further classified into 1) core regime, 2) input, 3) throughput, and 4) output principles. Democratic legitimacy was found to be an important source of legitimacy in the public discussion since democratic patterns were found in more than half of the texts. The most common core legitimacy principles included freedom of speech, good national and international standing, forerunnership, and legality at national and international level. The central principles related to input legitimacy included popular sovereignty, a voice for the people, popular participation, openness, presenting alternatives, and urgency. The consensus and majority rules were found to be the most prominent throughput principles. Democratic output legitimacy included accountability, responsibility, cooperation, commitment, responsiveness, the possibility to appeal, credibility, comprehensiveness, and understandability. The findings suggest that among the writers of readers' letters there is less contestation regarding the principles of democratic legitimacy but there are significant disagreements concerning the performance of decision-making processes. The negative performance evaluations were two times more frequent than the positive evaluations.

Keywords legitimacy, democracy, policy evaluation, forest policy, nature conservation policy, national forest program, nature conservation program

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1 Background

Democracy and public participation has been of growing interest among scholars and practitioners in the forest sector and all kinds of environmental policy-making for at least three decades.

This has been reflected to forest-related governance that comes with a wide range of new institutional arrangements, such as international forest processes, national forest programs, forest conservation programs, and forest certification. For example, the principle 10 of the Rio declaration (United... 1992) declares that the “Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level”. The modern policy-making also emphasizes voluntary self-organization of involved interest groups and devolution of power. Applications of participatory democracy have emerged in forest sector decision-making (Wallenius 2001). However, some forms of governance, such as the ‘Natura 2000 Networking Programme’ of the EU, have suffered from technocratic, top down mode of policy making that is criticized for being “too insensitive to local interests, too paternalistic for modern tastes, and too elitist for modern democracies” (Engelen et al. 2008). In general, the understanding of democracy is in transition and the same applies to institutional arrangements in the pursuit of democracy (Scholte 2008). Hence, an awareness concerning the conceptual vocabulary of democracy is important for any actor involved with forest policy issues.

The new forms of forest governance pose challenges to the legitimacy of forest regime and nature conservation policies that are different in nature from those of hierarchically-organized regimes (Glück et al. 2005). Legitimacy can be understood as an umbrella concept that covers a broad range of established values of community. Zelditch (2001) notes that there is a range of philosophical and scientific theories that can be applied in the conceptualization of legitimacy but he maintains that generally speaking “something is legitimate if it is in accord with the values, norms, beliefs, practices, and procedures accepted by the group”. The field of values that should be covered concerning forest sector issues includes at least democracy, welfare creation and distributive justice, rights (human, political, and

property rights), good governance, rule of law, values of nature issues, and sustainable development. Among these issues, this study focuses on the democratic legitimacy of forest sector and nature conservation decision-making¹.

The analysis of public political texts is important for understanding the legitimacy of public policies because the agreement on collective actions is essentially based on a general requirement of public justification (Godard 2007). In the public discussion, the actors produce texts that affect to institutions and shape individual behavior (Phillips et al. 2004). The texts published in the mass media in particular can serve as an important source for the studies of legitimacy, as perceived by the citizens and other political actors. Presently, there is a growing interest towards discursive approaches (“discursive or deliberative turn” in policy studies) among the scholars of forest and nature resource policies (e.g., Feindt and Oels 2005, Arts and Buizer 2009, Giessen et al. 2009, Steffek 2009).

Important forest sector applications regarding democracy are also available, these include Tuler and Webler (1999), Elsasser (2002), Mascarenhas and Scarce (2004), Glück et al. (2005), Parkins and Mitchell (2005), and Sheppard (2005). There is still limited understanding of the different views of citizens, especially considering the fact that the democracy-related issues are central to the overall legitimacy of a forest regime. Unfortunately, a large part of literature concerning democracy and public deliberation has been based rather on academic armchair theorization or on intuitive speculation than examinations of the demands of citizens and organized political actors as they come in real life contexts, such as in the media. However, the last decade’s advances of legitimacy and democracy studies in the political science have been under-utilized in the forest and nature conservation-related democracy studies; this applies especially to text analytical approaches, such as Hurrelmann et al. (2005a) and Schneider et al. (2007). In other words, more solid and valid

¹ The other dimensions of legitimacy are studied in another paper of the same research project (Helkama et al. 2010). The theoretical conceptions are analyzed in detail in Rantala (2011).

theoretical conceptions are needed for empirical studies of democratic legitimacy and the exploration of these is best done by careful study of empirical data, perhaps produced without excessive interference by researchers, and the application of the latest theorization.

The analysis of public political texts is important for understanding the legitimacy of public policies and governance because public texts provide information on public justifications that are acceptable to a population. The texts published in the mass media in particular can serve as an important source for the studies of legitimacy, as perceived by the citizens and other political actors. The data of this study are from the Finnish print media and represent a case of small North European liberal democratic nation that is relatively dependent on its advanced forest industry. Furthermore, the Finnish forest industry, in contrast with several other countries, operates globally, which increases interest to the Finnish forest discourse. The case of Finland serves as a point of comparison because there have been similar institutional arrangements in most western countries; these include forest programs and nature conservation programs, such as the 'Natura 2000 Networking Programme' of the European Union (EU...2005). Finland has been a fore-runner, for instance, in applying the concept of national forest program and public participation in the national policy-making, as called for in the Rio declaration (United... 1992).

The objective of this study is to explore conceptions of democratic legitimacy that are applied in public discussion concerning the forest regime. The empirical analysis, based on text data, focuses on recognizing the principles of democratic legitimacy and their frequencies as well as the different objects associated with these principles. The study aims at identifying and documenting the vocabulary of democratic legitimacy in a way that enables empirical comparisons between discussions in different arenas, sectors, and countries. The study also develops further the conceptual framework of legitimacy in order to better understand different dimensions of legitimacy and their relations.

The research questions are: Is democratic legitimacy a significant source of legitimacy in public discussion? What principles of democratic legitimacy do citizens and organized actors use

in their evaluations of decision-making in the current forest regime? Which are the most and less common principles? What are the performance evaluations of decision-making processes? Are there some principles specific only to forest-related decision-making or to Finland? Are the principles applied in a similar manner in public discussion as they are applied in theorization on democratic legitimacy?

The overall structure of study is as follows: Section 2 analyzes theoretical conceptions related to democratic legitimacy that are needed in the analysis of legitimation statements. Section 3 describes the data and procedure of analysis, Section 4 describes the results, Section 5 discusses the results and compares them with the preceding studies of democratic legitimacy, and Section 6 provides a conclusion on possibilities to apply the results.

2 Theoretical Conceptions of Democratic Legitimacy for Empirical Analysis

Political philosophy provides a broad, abstract, and fragmentary literature on the conceptions of democracy and their relations, often called normative theories of democracy. Furthermore, there are also "middle range" approaches with more interest to empirically-applicable conceptions (e.g. Dahl 1989 and 1998, Setälä 2003, Barker 2007, Bekkers and Edwards 2007, Scholte 2008). Following Dahl (1989: 37–43), standards of democratic process can be defined in terms of the following possibilities for the citizens: 1) effective participation, 2) voting equality, 3) enlightened understanding, 4) control of the agenda, and 5) inclusion of adult citizens.

Democracy has been depicted as "essentially contested concept, open to multiple meanings [...] democracy means different things to different people in different societies" (Norris 1999, p. 11, see also Saward 2003, Hurrelmann et al. 2007). One popular approach organizes the conceptions of democracy into "models of democracy" that depict general positions of typical parties most often in a relatively high level of abstraction (see Held 1987/1996, Bekkers and Edwards 2007).

The major class of empirical democracy studies are quantitative measures concerning the support for democracy among the population (e.g. Norris 1999, Linde and Ekman 2003, Sänkiäho 2006, Westle 2007) and studies that are designed for the purposes of comparisons of democratic performance in different countries (e.g. Beetham 1994, Saward 1994, Lijphart 1999). Another class of studies applies the principles of democracy in the evaluation of public policies and programs (Vedung 1997, Bemelmans-Videc et al. 1998). There are only few qualitative text analyses so far (e.g. Hurrelmann et al. 2005a, Schneider et al. 2007) despite that, e.g., Dahl (1998) and Sänkiäho (2006) have called for more understanding on how democracy is actually perceived by citizens. The studies by Hurrelmann et al. (2005a, 2005b) and Schneider et al. (2007) are used as a starting point for this study because they combine text analytical and political scientific approaches in a very utilizable way.

Hurrelmann et al. (2005a: 2–3) separate normative and empirical legitimacy. The former means a priori acceptability in the light of criteria provided by democratic theories or other strands of political philosophy and the latter refers to the factual a posteriori acceptance of nation-state institutions among the population. They note that the normative and empirical forms of legitimacy are not necessarily related and that normative principles of democratic theories might be of limited relevance for understanding citizens' attributions of legitimacy. In other words, the theoretical assumptions on the principles may differ from those which are important for citizens in real life. Therefore, an exploratory empirical analysis should not be limited only to fixed categories but rather focus on finding valid principles of legitimacy by means of empirical analysis and developing a categorization that supports the classification of findings. However, the key point here is not to reject theories but to develop an understanding of the connections between theories and observations.

The evaluative legitimation statement (Hurrelmann et al. 2005a, Schneider et al. 2007) has the following structure: [Object A] is (il)legitimate because of [Pattern B]. The basic units of statements consists of 1) the element of political order as object, 2) the "pattern of legitimation" that serves as a supporting argument (source of

legitimacy), and 3) the performance evaluation. The democracy-related argumentation also refers regularly to the involved people or groups of people as follows: "Participation / representation / dominance of [person/group C] improves / reduces legitimacy of [Object A]".

Norris (1999) and Linde and Ekman (2003) distinguish between five objects of support: 1) the political community, 2) regime principles, 3) regime performance, 4) regime institutions, and 5) political actors. This study focuses on the democratic institutions, their performance, and their patterns of justification that are considered as the heart of legitimacy, as described in the following (the support for the community and particular political actors are not analyzed in this study).

Linde and Ekman (2003) maintain that the institutions, which are seen as objects of popular support, include governments, parliaments, the executive, the legal system and police, the state bureaucracy, political parties, and the military. The formal institutions of participation and representation, namely the parliament, elections, and governmental working groups, must also be included in the central democratic institutions. In the context of democratic legitimacy in the forest sector, the basic democratic institutions include the public decision-making processes on forest and nature conservation issues. The informal, mostly customary and citizen-driven forms of participation, such as direct participation and boycott campaigns that are relatively common, for instance to forest conservation-related participation also belong to the institutions of participation.

The regime principles function in two roles. First, they are objects of support or denial of support, for instance "support for democracy as the best form of government" (Norris 1999, Linde and Ekman 2004). Second, they serve as patterns of legitimacy or illegitimacy, i.e. benchmarks in the performance evaluations of other political objects. In empirical text analysis, almost all evaluations fall in the latter class, where the evaluator applies some patterns of legitimacy as a benchmark of the ideal state of institutional arrangements (see Rantala 2011 for a detailed analysis).

The term "pattern of legitimacy" refers to supporting arguments (Schneider et al. 2007). For the most part, these consist of normative principles,

Table 1. Framework of analysis.

	Ideals	Performance
(A) Democracy and alternative forms of government (Section 4.1)	Support for democracy as an ideal form of decision-making or support for alternative ideals	Support for realization of democracy or its alternatives in practice
(B) Democratic and alternative forms of participation (Section 4.2)	Support for democratic and alternative public participation procedures as ideals	Support for the realization of democratic and alternative public participation procedures in practice
(C) Normative principles		
Core regime principles (Section 4.3.1)	Support for core regime principles as ideals	Support for realization of core regime principles in practice
Input characteristics of political process (Section 4.3.2)	} Support for principles of ideal democratic processes	} Support for realization of democratic principles in practice in current democratic processes
Throughput characteristics of political processes (Section 4.3.3)		
Output characteristics of political results (Section 4.3.4)		

such as popular sovereignty, accountability, or responsiveness. However, they may also include references to the traditional, charismatic, or religious authorities, as in seminal studies by Weber (1914/1968) or to culture-specific figurative language, such as health, machine, and organic metaphors. In the context of this study, the concept of pattern refers to those principles that are used in the (il)legitimation of former, existing, or proposed forest sector institutions. The patterns of legitimacy can be observed at three different levels: (A) at a relatively general ideological level (support for democracy or alternative forms of government), (B) in terms of democratic and alternative forms of participation (support for different public participation procedures), and (C) by focusing on procedural principles of democracy and principles related to substantive outputs and respective outcomes (support for the different principles) (Table 1).

Legitimacy studies, such as Scharpf (1997, 1999) often separate input- and output-oriented patterns of legitimacy. According to Hurrelmann et al. (2005b), the input-oriented pattern refers to “the process of decision-making, in particular to the actors involved and the procedures followed” and the output-oriented pattern refers to “the results of the process, their quality and consequences” (note that their definitions differ from

those of Easton 1965: 353 and Scharpf 1997: 153–157 and 1999: 6–21).

Some studies, such as Bekkers and Edwards (2007), add a third class between input and output dimensions, namely a throughput dimension. That dimension is associated with how decisions ought to be made and especially with majoritarian and consensual decision rules.

Furthermore, a group of general values that underline western regimes are useful to separate from the principles related to the democratic processes. Almost all studies on democracy suggest that the democratic system necessitates a set of general values that are often depicted as liberal democratic values or values of constitutional democracy. Easton (1965: 194–200) call these “regime values” whereas Saward (1994: 16) uses term “basic freedoms”. The values that can be considered to be foundational by nature at the least include popular sovereignty, equality, political and human rights, and legality. This group of values is hereafter denoted as the “core regime principles”.

To summarize, the democratic principles can be divided into 1) core regime principles (What are preconditions for democracy, basic rights, and sources of legality?), 2) input legitimacy of decision-making process (Who are involved in agenda setting?), 3) throughput characteristics

of political processes (How should decisions to be made?), and output characteristics of political processes (What is substantial output and contribution to input?) in this study (see Table 1).

The democratic quality of evaluations can further be classified in the 1) democratic, 2) extra-democratic, and 3) counter-democratic forms of decision-making where the second refers to a decision-making that is supplementary or neutral to democracy and the third is complementary to democracy. For example, the decision-making that is characterized by a dominance by the experts, by the free markets, by the public administration, and the use of traditions as guidelines may be perceived as extra-democratic or counter-democratic. In the contexts of forest issues, the major extra-democratic principles include welfare, effectiveness, distributive justice, values of nature, and environmental sustainability. However, the focus of this study is in democratic legitimacy.

In the explorative text analysis, the category of performance in the classification by Norris (1999) is best understood as an evaluation of state of affairs (cf. Miller and Linstead 1999, Westle 2007, see different definitions of performance by Easton 1965: 293–295, Lillbacka 1999: 86–108, Linde and Ekman 2004: 405). Then performance means support or deny of support to institutional arrangements, namely the realization of ideals. The patterns of legitimacy are applied as benchmarks of the ideal arrangements. The basic performance evaluations can be classified as positive, negative, or mixed (Saldana 2009: 58–60). In this study, the last class includes the evaluations that discuss both positive and negative aspects and some rare arguments that express a pattern but no interpretable performance evaluation.

The performance evaluations can be analyzed according to three basic states of institutional

arrangements: these are past, present and the anticipated or recommended future state (Richardson 1997: 157–159). In this study, the coding has been made according to the present state but in some rare cases the object of evaluation was a forthcoming, almost assured institutional change. The following report of results focuses mostly on the classification of ideals; the performance evaluations are described only when they diverge from major lines. However, complete frequencies of performance can be found in results Tables 4–9.

3 Data and Procedure of Analysis

The study explores the print media discourse, based on readers' letters in three newspapers and in one journal. The print media data are supplemented with comments during the process of the Finnish National Forest Program. In total, 670 relevant texts were sampled and analyzed (see Table 2). The data sampling was planned to include media that represent laymen and representatives of organizations, urban and rural population, forestry and environmental actors, and governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Of the newspapers studied, *Helsingin Sanomat* (HS) is the largest newspaper in Finland, *Maaseudun tulevaisuus* (MT) is a middle-sized newspaper, and *Vihreä lanka* (VL) is a weekly journal of the Green League of Finland; all of these are published in Helsinki, the capital of Finland. *Turun Sanomat* (TS) is a middle-sized newspaper published in the fifth largest city of the country. *Helsingin Sanomat* reaches 25% of Finns and 66% of the population of the Helsinki region (HS... 2006), and the audience of *Turun*

Table 2. Description of the data.

	Circulation	Publisher	Sample size	Sample period
Turun Sanomat	112 000	Independent	149	1997–2004
Vihreä lanka	4 000	Green League of Finland	23	1998–2004
Maaseudun tulevaisuus	82 000	Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK)	181	2003–2004
Helsingin Sanomat	422 000	Independent	177	2002–2004
National Forest Program	-	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	140	1998

Sanomat represents most social groups in south-western Finland (Mediatiedot 2005). *Maaseudun tulevaisuus* especially represents the rural population of Finland (Maaseudun... 2005). *Vihreä lanka* is a small party journal with a circulation of 4000. These data sets were supplemented with comments received during the preparation of the Finland's National Forest Program (NFP, see Finland's... 1999) because these texts included more non-governmental and governmental organizations of the forest sector that were not very well represented in other data.

The selected data of 670 writings consisted of those texts that included a clear reference to forest use or conservation as well as those involved in national forest policy or forest-related nature conservation policy. The texts related to urban parks, were excluded from the data because municipal level government was not the topic of this study. The data included texts written by laymen (44%), officials who represented public administration (9%), politicians (8%), researchers (11%), and representatives of organized interest groups, namely environmental NGOs (14%), organizations of landowners (4%) and professional organizations (1%) and other organizations (9%). A layman as used here denotes that the writer used only his or her own name or a pseudonym with no reference to organizations, companies, etc.

The analysis followed the principles of analytic induction (e.g. Cresswell 2003: 131–133, Koskinen et al. 2006: 233–241). The coding was done with the computer program Atlas.ti 5.2. The first stage of analysis started with preliminary coding of a data subset of 50 texts. Each text was a separate unit of analysis. The coded quotations varied from one sentence to almost the entire text. The evaluative arguments were classified into categories and named according to different principles

of legitimacy that were found in the data. After reaching the end of all the data, the coding was restarted from the beginning of the data in order to search for evaluations that belonged to the new categories found during the analysis. The classification was gradually developed during the analysis into more general categories. At the final stage of analysis, these categories were grouped into clusters ("families") according to connections found between the categories and some of the quotations were selected for the demonstration of typical legitimation statements in the next section. By following Hurrelmann et al. (2005a) and Schneider et al. (2007), the reporting supplements qualitative description of data and text citations with tables that sum the principles and associated objects as well as the frequencies of principles and performance evaluations.

4 Results

4.1 Democracy and Alternative Forms of Government in the Forest Sector

Democracy-related arguments were found in 58% of the texts (see Table 3). Of performance evaluations, 56% were negative and 28% were positive while 16% were classified as mixed evaluations. Relatively similar relations of performance figures were found throughout the data but 'Maaseudun tulevaisuus' and 'Turun Sanomat' showed slightly more negative evaluations and the comments on the National Forest Program had more than average positive evaluations. In the following, the reporting of performance evaluations focuses mostly on the classes of patterns that deviate from the major lines, namely two times more

Table 3. The frequency of texts that included democracy-related arguments (%).

		Turun Sanomat	Vihreä lanka	Maaseudun tulevaisuus	Helsingin Sanomat	National Forest Program	All
Democracy-related arguments, % of texts		58	91	56	61	51	58
of which performance evaluation, %	+	23	33	19	30	37	28
	–	63	53	71	55	43	56
	+/-	14	14	10	15	20	16

negative performance evaluations than positive evaluations, and especially on the deviant classes that consist of more than a few observations.

Several decision-making processes were found as major objects in the texts; these included the Finland's National Forest Program (see Finland's... 1999, hereafter "NFP"), 'Natura 2000 Networking Programme' of the EU (see EU...2005, hereafter "Natura"), Programme on the Protection Southern Finland's Forests (see Etelä-Suomen... 2002, hereafter "Metso"), and the participatory planning processes of the forest sector (Wallenius 2001). In addition to these references to specified processes, a significant amount of evaluations referred only to general forest-related decision-making, here entitled "forest sector decision-making in general" (hereafter FSDM) and "nature conservation decision-making in general" (hereafter NCDM).

Democracy was in general referred to as the best form of government in forest sector and arguments that would directly challenge democracy as a principal ideal of public decision-making were virtually non-existent in the data. Table 4 presents the observations concerning the support for democracy and other alternative "-cracies", such as technocracy and bureaucracy. The conception of democracy referred basically to popular influence and citizens' control of public decisions.

- (1) In order to be true to democracy's spirit, there should be open political discussion [on NFP], in which the opinions and alternatives of different political parties would come up. If the decision is made by the next parliament, the citizens could affect the direction of the forest sector through elections. (Environmental organization, VL 51-53/1998)

The realization of democracy in the forest-related decision-making in practice was criticized more often than praised, occasionally with reference to a democratic deficit. Also, the performance of formal institutions, such as the parliament, government, and the judicial institutions that were assumed to support the realization of democracy, were discussed critically. Among the judicial institutions, the constitution was at times mentioned as a source of democracy.

- (2) Has the democratic deficit [in the forest sector decision making] unobtrusively become common and institutionalized, with an aid from the corporatist judiciary – the free and independent? [...] According to the constitution, it can be said that this power is in every way inalienable and belongs to the citizens. Power, in spite of all this, has now slid from those for whom the system was created. (Layman, MT 8.9.2004)

Another form of pro-democracy argument referred to the whole liberal-democratic regime and depicted the ideal by presenting a negative point of comparison. The data included many arguments that referred to counter-democratic and, more generally, to non-free or non-Western regimes. The list of these ideologies includes dictatorship, socialism (Soviet Union, Pan-Slavism, Bolshevistic, the Khmers of Cambodia, international socialism, and collective economy), fascism, and totalitarianism. The acts associated with these ideologies included most often socializing and exploitation of private property.

Many texts assessed EU government and little over half of these perceived the EU as illegitimate and therefore as a source of illegitimacy for forest-related decisions. The illegitimacy and negative performance of EU were especially associated with Natura 2000 and the EU-regulated conservation of the Russian flying squirrel, (*Pteromys volans*). For the defenders of Natura 2000, the EU served as a source of legitimate government.

In addition to democratic decision-making, several other forms of decision-making, such as decisions by experts, by public administration, and markets, were discussed in the data. In principle, there are several alternative ways to understand the role of these forms of decision-making. Depending on context, they may be understood either as supplementary or neutral (both extra-democratic forms of decision-making) or as complementary (i.e. counter-democratic) to democracy. However, expert decision-making was the only one of these that was perceived as mostly legitimate and well-performing in the context of political processes while many kinds of dominance structures were thought to be illegitimate (see Table 4).

The decision-making by experts was accepted by many writers and perceived as supplementary to democracy. The experts or scientific studies

Table 4. Democracy and alternative forms of government in (il)legitimation of forest sector decision-making (frequency, % of all and performance, % of each pattern).

Pattern	Statement	Objects ^{a)}	Examples	Frequency, % of all	of which performance, %		
					+	-	+/-
Democracy in general	Democratic decision-making improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM, NFP, Metso	1, 2	3.6	29	58	13
Liberal-democratic regime in general	Decision-making based on liberal-democratic regime improves legitimacy	NCDM, Natura, FSDM	3	3.6	12	88	0
EU governance legitimate	EU governance improves legitimacy	Natura, NCDM	9, 12	4.2	68	25	7
No dominance by EU	EU's dominance is illegitimate	NCDM, Natura	3, 5	4.5	0	97	3
Expert participation legitimate	Participation of or decision-making by experts improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM, Natura, NFP	7	4.2	68	11	21
No dominance by experts	Dominance by experts decreases legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP		1.6	0	100	0
No dominance by elites	Dominance by elites decreases legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP, Metso		3.1	14	76	10
No dominance by administration	Dominance by administration decreases legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP, Natura	3	2.8	11	89	0
No dominance of technology	Dominance of technology or technocracy is illegitimate	FSDM		2.4	6	88	6
No dominance by charismatic	Dominance of charismatic persons reduce legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM		1.9	8	38	54
No dominance by extremists	Dominance by extremists or extremist ideologies reduce legitimacy	NCDM, Natura, FSDM	4	6.6	11	64	25
No dominance by religious ideologies	Religious ideologies or beliefs in decision-making reduce legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM		2.2	33	67	0
No dominance by (big) companies	Dominance by (big) companies decreases legitimacy	FSDM		1.9	0	92	8
No dominance by (global) market economy	Dominance by market economy over democracy is illegitimate	FSDM		0.3	0	100	0
No dominance by economic interest groups	Dominance by economic interest groups reduces legitimacy	FSDM		0.9	0	100	0
No dominance by environmental organizations	Dominance by environmental organizations reduces legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM		2.1	0	100	0
No dominance by single issue movements	Dominance by single issue movements reduces legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM		0.6	25	50	25
Traditions	Decision-making based on traditions or processes' contribution to traditions improves legitimacy	NCDM, Natura, NFP, FSDM		1.2	25	75	0
Modernity	Modern decision-making improves legitimacy	NFP, FSDM, NCDM, Natura, Metso		2.5	47	47	6

^{a)} FSDM=forest sector decision-making in general, NCDM=nature conservation decision-making in general, NFP=National Forest Program, Natura=Natura 2000, Metso=Programme on the Protection Southern Finland's Forests

were referred to and occasionally cited as reliable sources of information in almost half of the texts. The understanding of this information was, however, varying and the interpretations and conclusions in the texts quite commonly differed from those of scientists.

Another line of argument perceived power by experts and elites in general as illegitimate. Expert knowledge was contrasted with local knowledge and to practical professional know-how. Occasionally, the lack of neutrality and competence along with the alleged self-interest of experts was criticized.

The dominance by administration or bureaucratization was perceived as negative both in terms of ideals and performance. Excessive bureaucracy was mostly evaluated in terms of freedom, constraining individuals too much, and by efficient use of public financing.

- (3) It is unnecessary to imagine that in this golden age of satellite control and EU bureaucracy the socialization of private lands could be taken with salty humor and forgiving minor lapses. (Layman, TS 28.7.1997)

A different line of argument referred to the perceived dominance of technology i.e. technocracy. These arguments were often combined with criticism of large-scale forestry, mass production and the biggest companies of forest industry.

References to charismatic and religious authorities and religion were rare in the corpus of this study and, when applied, they were used with no exception as sources of illegitimacy rather than legitimacy.

One very common class of arguments referred to the dominance of decision-making by extremists, fanatics, and even (eco)terrorists; this was associated with acts of lying, troublemaking, and harassment. The most typical extremism-related arguments referred to the green ideology as extremism, nature conservation as an act of socializing, and direct action as a form of terrorism. However, counter-arguments that focused on disconnecting political activities and actors to be legitimated from non-desirable ideologies were also found.

- (4) The land-owners are not given information on what the Supreme Administrative Court bases

their decisions and on what basis the government nailed down the Natura 2000 program. The reputation of judicial administration, suffering from loss of trustworthiness, will hardly be improved because the Finnish government, like minister Manninen, humble themselves in front of green terrorism. (Layman, MT 17.12.2004)

A number of arguments that promoted or criticized the free markets as a fair system for decision-making in the private forest sector were found in the data. The demands for privatization of public administration services were also found in many texts. However, there was surprisingly little discussion about the relation between market economy and democratic decision-making neither at the domestic nor at the global levels. The arguments on globalization connected this phenomenon almost entirely as an economic question with reference to the competitiveness of the nation, the Finnish forest companies, or the wood prices for forest owners in globalizing markets. Some arguments were concerned with the perceived increasing power of big, supranational forest industry at the national and local levels. The cases of international environmental agreements and EU-driven environmental legislation were somewhat discussed in the context of globalization and its effects on national democracy. The individuals making the evaluations on globalization were typically worried about weakening possibilities for national decision-making and diminishing autonomy.

- (5) All these are serious questions [concerning the nature conservation decisions in the private land] and to all these the voice of highest farm owner seem to be heard from the EU. As a resettlement farmer at heart and as I am responsible for my home farm, I am very bitter. The peasant's age-old rights are being downtrodden. (Politician, MT 4.8.2003)

The dominance by economic interest groups (corporatism) was mentioned only seldom but, when mentioned, it was perceived as an illegitimate way of organizing participation. The environmental organizations were criticized for illegitimate dominance by using illegitimate means for affecting policies, to be analyzed more below. In

this data, the environmental movement was only occasionally depicted as a “single issue movement”; however, the lack of comprehensiveness (see section 4.3.4 below) was a similar and a more common argument.

A reference to traditional values, sometimes also entitled the traditional Finnish or Western values, were rare in the context of public decision-making but, when applied, they served as a source of legitimation. A different version of the time-related argument referred to the modernity or old-fashioned quality of decision-making, meaning legitimacy and illegitimacy, respectively. In other words, policy-making was assessed whether it was prepared in accordance with the spirit of the time or not.

4.2 Forms of Democratic Participation in Forest-Related Decision-Making

The formal and informal participatory institutions, which are available for citizens and organized actors, are important parts of democracy. The forms of formal public decision-making that were discussed in the texts included parliamentary decision-making, working groups, and participatory planning (see Table 5). Another important view was the organization of citizens and the democratic nature of such organizations. The participation included not only the forms of more or less spontaneous direct participation by citizens but also more organized campaigns, petitions, boycotts, demonstrations, and direct action; these can be characterized as informal, citizen-initiated institutions. Also the legality of different forms of participation in general and legitimacy of agitation on illegal action, as well as questions of political violence were discussed.

Parliamentary representative democracy as an ideal form of government was not challenged and there were no suggestions that its key institutions, namely a representative parliament, equal opportunity for voting or accountability by regular elections should be replaced by other forms of decision-making.

- (6) The ongoing preparation of the National Forest Program provides a good opportunity for the change of direction. Parliament is in a key position and it should take the lead in this most important

future question of Finland. (Environmental organization, NFP 7.11.1998)

However, the incumbent ministers, members of parliament, political parties, and opposition, respectively, faced plenty of critics in the exchange of arguments. Day-to-day parliamentary politics was referred to in 5,7% of texts (not classified as part of legitimacy and not included in Table 9). The political parties and individual politicians were mostly negatively represented. Much of the most severe criticisms of parties, ministers, and members of parliament were by other politicians, especially prior to the 2003 national elections. Despite the criticisms, the representatives were also asked to help in solving problems.

The working groups that have been a central form of participation in the preparation of NFP's and the nature conservation program METSO were in generally perceived as legitimate forms of participation. Also, the performance evaluations on how these groups had in practice operated were often positive. An important additional attribute in legitimizing working groups was the broad participation of the involved groups.

- (7) The preparation of the National Forest Program, which involved the broad participation of experts and working groups with many meetings, has been a positive and constructive experience. (Forest industry, NFP 6.5.1998)

The participatory planning of Metsähallitus was perceived as a legitimate institution in terms of ideals when discussed. The public hearings of Natura 2000 were also perceived as positive but insufficient and their practical implementation was somewhat criticized.

Active civil society involvement and the direct participation of citizens were always presented in a positive light with no exceptions. The organization of interests as an idea was perceived positively. In some arguments, the current organization of citizens that were perceived to be involved in forest issues was evaluated as inadequate because of the perceived insufficient organization of forest owners and recreation users. The internal democracy and responsiveness to demands of members by associations was somewhat discussed, for example the forest associations (semi-gov-

ernmental organizations of forest owners) were criticized as favoring those owners living in the countryside and Greenpeace was criticized as an undemocratic and closed association.

The legitimacy of political campaigning, such as international campaigns by nature conservation organizations, split opinions. The petitions (addresses) were perceived as legitimate while boycotts were perceived as illegitimate but the numbers of these arguments were small.

Direct action, namely demonstrations, stopping the felling of timber, and other public provocations received mixed legitimacy evaluations. The major principles for the legitimation of direct action were freedom of speech, legality, and non-violence, along with well-reasoned nature conservation. The delegitimizing vocabulary includes terms harassment, “single issue movements”, and references to extremist ideologies meant to represent something especially unwanted, such as socialism, fascism, totalitarianism, and terrorism. The constitution was referred to sometimes as the formal source of the participation’s legitimacy. The insertion in the Forest Act that limited demonstration in the felling sites stimulated some discussion about the relationships between the core regime principles underlining democratic regimes: freedom of speech, business freedom, freedom of occupation, owner’s right and right for compensation of harms and losses.

- (8) According to the legislative proposal, only hanging around near a harvester or opening of a banderol in the logging site would be punishable acts even if old-growth forest that is valuable for nature conservation is destroyed in an area. [...] Moreover, the proposal has been focused against completely legal, non-violent and non-mischievous demonstrations, that is to say a limitation of freedom of speech. (Environmental organization, HS 26.5.2004)

No argument that directly defended the legitimacy of illegal actions was found but broadening the illegalization was opposed. However, the lay interpretations of what actions are legal or illegal and the rightful punishments of illegality seem to vary. Some of the negative evaluations associated forest conservation activists with animal rights activists who have acted anonymously and

destroyed property. Agitation to illegal activities and political violence were perceived as illegitimate with no exceptions.

4.3 Principles Underlining the Democratic Legitimacy of Forest Regime

4.3.1 Core Regime Principles

The empirical analysis found that much of the discourse on the legitimacy of decision-making in forest issues was situated within the context of the liberal-democratic constitutional state. The texts regularly referred to the decision-making’s contribution to principles of freedom of speech, civilization, equality, sovereignty, and separation of powers (Table 5). These values were often depicted as Finnish or Western values and the arguments frequently refer to the constitution as a source of legitimacy. The constitution was seldom evaluated against moral standards but lower levels of legislation and proposals for changing legislation were evaluated using both moral principles and the constitution as standards. The performance evaluations using this group of arguments were often negative.

- (9) Other countries proceed in a different way [in Natura 2000]. The EU underlines openness and negotiations in a positive spirit. So this thing is handled in a civilized manner, negotiation, and is on a voluntary basis. (Layman, TS 2.12.1997)
- (10) The schedule of [Natura 2000] is impossible from the point of view handling the matter and the legal protection of people. (Politician, TS 19.5.1998)

The contribution to the forest sector’s domestic and international reputation was one of the most popular arguments in the evaluation of political processes. In other words, the public image at home and abroad was of interest. The argument that draws legitimacy from responsibility to moral forerunnership of nation was another common argument and also the more benefit-oriented arguments, referring to a nation’s superior ability to utilize forest resources and success in economic competition as a justification of certain kinds of decision-making were frequently mentioned.

Table 5. Different forms of participation as sources of (il)legitimacy in forest-related decision-making (frequency, % of all and performance, % of each pattern).

Pattern	Statement	Objects ^{a)}	Examples	Frequency, %	of which performance, %		
					+	-	+/-
Parliamentary decisions	Parliamentary decision-making improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP	6	3.3	45	41	14
Working groups	Working groups (with broad participation) improve legitimacy	NFP, FSDM, NCDM	7	2.8	79	16	5
Direct participation in general	Direct participation by single citizens improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM		1.3	56	11	33
Direct participation to planning	Direct participation by single citizens to (participatory) planning processes improves legitimacy	Participatory planning processes, public hearings of Natura, and NFP	13	4.0	44	48	7
Organization of citizens	Organization of involved citizens into associations improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM (forest owners' organizations, professional organizations, environmental NGOs)		1.3	33	33	33
Associations' responsiveness	Participating associations' responsiveness to demands of members improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM (forest owners organizations, forest associations)		2.1	7	79	14
Associations' internal democracy	Participating associations' internal democracy improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM (environmental NGOs, forest owners' organizations)		0.6	25	50	25
Associations' large membership	Large membership of participating organizations improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM (environmental NGOs, forest owners' organizations, professional organizations)		1.8	50	33	17
Campaigns, legitimate	Political campaigns improve legitimacy	NCDM		0.9	100	0	0
Campaigns, illegitimate	Political campaigns decrease legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM		1.0	0	86	14
Petitions	Petitions improve legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM		0.4	100	0	0
No boycotts	Promoting boycotting decreases legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM		0.7	20	80	0
Direct action, legitimate	Direct action increases legitimacy	NCDM	8	1.8	8	58	34
Direct action, illegitimate	Direct action decreases legitimacy	NCDM		3.4	9	74	17
Legality of participation	Legality of participation improves legitimacy	NCDM	8	3.0	5	65	30
No agitation to illegality	Agitation to illegal activities decreases legitimacy	NCDM		0.9	17	83	0
Non-violence	Violent forms of participation decrease legitimacy	NCDM		1.2	25	75	0

^{a)} FSDM=forest sector decision-making in general, NCDM=nature conservation decision-making in general, NFP=National Forest Program, Natura=Natura 2000, METSO=Programme on the Protection Southern Finland's Forests

(11) The National Forest Program has an especially important role because the Finnish program is one of the first of its kind. Therefore it should serve as an example for others. Is an emphasis on wood production the message that the Finnish forest sector wants to send in a situation where Finland had a possibility to introduce a good example regarding the consideration of social and ecological sustainability. (Other officials, organizations, and companies, NFP 13.11.1998)

The performance evaluations of international standing and forerunnership were found to be often positive. However, a line of argument that evaluated an excessive moral forerunnership at the international level as illegitimate was also found.

Another argument that belongs to the category of core regime principles involves legality at the national, EU, and international levels. The judicial institutions, especially the national legislation and international agreements served as a normative basis for determining whether decisions were legitimate or illegitimate. Non-binding international agreements were presented as sources of legitimacy in the very same way as formally binding national legislation and EU directives.

When perceived as illegitimate, the domestic and international formal or legally non-binding rule systems served as a source of illegitimacy in evaluations. This especially concerned the discussion on international agreements, namely climate conventions, the Aarhus Convention, and EU legislation.

(12) It is grotesque that in the program [NFP], there is no word about the present state of forest biodiversity. How could it have been forgotten to include the Helsinki-resolutions of the European forest minister process concerning biodiversity? (Environmental organization, VL 4/1999)

Arguments referring to the evil of corruption were rarely found but, when mentioned, they functioned as sources of illegitimacy with no exception.

4.3.2 *Input Characteristics of the Political Process*

The central principles related to democratic decision-making processes will be analyzed in this and the following sections; these have been divided into the input, throughput, and output dimensions of the democratic process. Input legitimacy is defined by referring to the agenda setting stage in which the central questions are: Who is involved in the decision-making and how the agenda should be formulated? The central principles related to input legitimacy were found to be: popular sovereignty, a voice for the people, popular participation, openness, no preconditions, presenting alternatives and urgency (Table 6). A large amount of principles concerning the public deliberation of good quality were also found.

The principle of popular sovereignty referred to the idea that a legitimate order should be based on government by the people. Another close legitimacy-improving ideal was a voice for the people, which meant a possibility to have the people's opinions heard and considered in the decision-making.

(13) Two three years ago, the natural resource planning of state forests in the Kainuu region was substantially developed through participatory planning in which everybody could present their opinions. In this regional working group, I got an impression that all opinions were taken into account. It is clear that all hopes could not be realized. (Other officials, organizations, and companies, NFP 22.4.1998)

Another version of the voice argument proposed improvements in attention paid to the voices of weak people; that argument referred most often to small non-industrial private forest owners. All these ideas were relatively close of the idea of political rights, i.e. freedom of speech, discussed above. A different argument delegitimized the participation of too vocal minorities.

The people's opportunity to political participation and influence to decisions was defined as one of the central principles of legitimate decision-making in many texts. However, one of the key questions in democracy is who actually are the people involved (or "stakeholders"). In general, the group of involved people was understood to be

Table 6. Core regime principles underlining democracy of forest-related decision-making (frequency, % of all and performance, % of each pattern).

Pattern	Statement	Objects ^{a)}	Examples	Frequency, %	of which performance, %		
					+	-	+/-
Freedom of speech	Contribution to freedom of speech improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM	8	3.0	35	50	15
Civilization	Contribution to civilization improves legitimacy	NCDM, Natura, FSDM	9	2.4	25	63	12
Equality	Contribution to equality improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM		1.2	0	100	0
National sovereignty	Contribution to national sovereignty improves legitimacy	NCDM, Natura, NFP		1.3	0	100	0
Separation of powers	Separation of powers improves legitimacy	NCDM, FCDM	2	0.7	0	100	0
National standing	Good national standing improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, Natura		3.3	55	45	0
International standing	Good international standing improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, Natura		7.3	53	33	14
Forerunnership, moral legitimate	Moral forerunnership at the international level improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, Natura, NFP	11	6.1	41	44	15
Forerunnership, moral illegitimate	Excessive moral forerunnership at the international level reduces legitimacy	NCDM		1.6	0	100	0
Forerunnership, utilization	Forerunnership of nation in utilizing forest resources improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP, Natura		4.6	68	29	3
Forerunnership, competitiveness	Forerunnership in nation's international competitiveness improves legitimacy	FSDM, decision-making on wood and forest products market policies, NFP		2.2	53	47	0
International legislation, legitimate	Political processes' conformation with international agreements improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP, Natura		4.3	34	41	25
International legislation, illegitimate	Political processes' rule by international agreements decreases legitimacy	NCDM		0.9	0	100	0
EU legislation, legitimate	Political processes' conformation with EU-legislation improves legitimacy	Natura, NCDM, NFP		5.1	26	59	15
EU legislation, illegitimate	Political processes' rule by EU-legislation decreases legitimacy	NCDM		0.3	0	100	0
National legislation, legitimate	Political processes' conformation with legislation improves legitimacy	Natura, NCDM, NFP	1, 10	4.2	21	61	18
No corruption	Corruption reduces legitimacy	NCDM		0.6	0	50	50

^{a)} FSDM=forest sector decision-making in general, NCDM=nature conservation decision-making in general, NFP=National Forest Program, Natura=Natura 2000, Metso=Programme on the Protection Southern Finland's Forests

those who are members of the Finnish political and territorial communities. Another idea claimed that the involved people are those who are impacted by decision. Functional definitions concerning the representation of important interests concerning forest use in society were also found, along with justification by its representation of future generations and nature. The nature conservation organizations, land owners, and rural population disputed who had the right to represent nature.

(14) It is a part of socially sustainable forestry that everybody has an opportunity to influence the decision-making concerning his own forest, be it a forest in his property or a forest that is part of his home scenery. (Other officials, organizations, and companies, NFP 1998)

One of the most common legitimization of processes was to refer to broad participation of citizens and different interest groups. More satisfied than dissatisfied performance evaluations concerning this principle of broad inclusiveness were found.

(15) The way to find the best solution to problems of forest use requires that open discussion is allowed and that the all parties' rights of participation should be recognized. (Environmental organization, HS 23.11.2002)

A common line of argument promoted the principle of openness of agenda-setting, decision-making, and political processes in general. The term transparency somewhat overlaps with openness and the antonym to pro-openness was secrecy. An additional openness-related normative demand given for processes was publicity of agenda-setting and decision-making.

(16) The environmental administration has pushed forward the openness of preparation, the participation of all involved, and, among other things, the assessment of impacts. Therefore it is not excessive to demand that the administration itself act accordingly [in the preparation of Natura 2000]. (Politician, VL 36/1998)

Access to public information was put forward as one feature of openness. However, the questions of privacy, especially the publicity of state-co-

financed information related to forest planning in the private forests, was discussed, although not very specifically in the context of openness.

An argument that there ought not to be preconditions or frames in agenda setting was related to the input stage of the political process. This relatively infrequent principle was associated with illegitimate dominance by different groups, discussed above.

The principles given for decision-making included also a demand to present alternative courses of actions. It was proposed that it should be physically possible to physically implement the alternatives. In counter-terms, proposing policies that fail to present feasible alternatives was claimed to be illegitimate. Especially those who were perceived to be against the current forest policy decision-making were criticized on a self-purposeful resistance to "development" with no implementable alternatives.

(17) A good strategy paper presents genuine strategic alternatives that could in this case have been, for example, the following [...] (Other officials, organizations, and companies, NFP 8.12.1998)

The urgency of matters was discussed both in relation to the agenda-setting and decision-making stages. Decisions concerning nature conservation were most typically presented as being urgent. The performance evaluations of urgency were more negative than other evaluations.

(18) The Finnish Association for Nature Conservation suggests that we should urgently prepare a target, financing, and implementation program for the conservation of Southern Finland, the Province of Oulu and South-Western Lapland. (Environmental organization, NFP 8.12.1998)

A large number of principles related to the public deliberation were presented in the data. In addition to the abovementioned openness-related principles, these included principles concerning rational and fair exchange of arguments, such as criticality, inclusiveness, impartiality, support for dissidents, reasonableness, and reliability of information, and other virtues of participants, such taking the initiative, being honest, being non-populist, being considerate, and not making prop-

agenda. All these arguments were summarized into the public deliberation class in Table 6.

- (19) The outcome, despite occasional bad stumbling of process, proves that perhaps there can be a dialog on a rational basis concerning the forest issues. (Organizations of land-owners, VL 2/1999)

Very many texts referred to the reliability of information but only some underlined rational dialog and the improvement of the quality of decisions explicitly through public discussion and consideration. In addition to the principles of public deliberation, the data included a number

of arguments related to the fair conduct of the media; however, it is impossible to comment on these in detail in this article.

4.3.3 Throughput Characteristics of Political Processes

The throughput dimension of political processes is related to how decisions ought to be made. The principles of throughput dimensions are called the decision rules and of these, the consensus and majority rules were found to be the most prominent (Table 7).

Table 7. Democratic input legitimacy of forest-related decision-making (frequency, % of all and performance, % of each pattern).

Pattern	Statement	Objects ^{a)}	Examples	Frequency, %	of which performance, %		
					+	-	+/-
Popular sovereignty	Legitimate order is based on government by the people	NFP, NCDM, FSDM	2	1.0	0	86	14
Voice	Voice for the people improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM, participatory planning	1, 13, 14, 15, 24	1.6	45	45	10
Voice for the weak	Voice for the weak groups of people improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM, Natura		2.1	0	93	7
Nonvocality	Vocal participation reduces legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM		1.2	0	88	12
Civic society	Opportunity of participation for civic society improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM		1.9	46	46	8
Popular participation	Participation / representation of the involved groups of people improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP, Natura	9, 13, 14, 15, 16	11.6	22	60	18
Broad participation	Broad participation improves legitimacy	NFP, NCDM, FSDM, participatory planning		4.0	48	26	26
Openness	Openness improves legitimacy	NFP, NCDM, FSDM, Natura	1, 4, 9, 16, 24, 26	7.0	36	55	9
No preconditions	Preconditions in agenda-setting reduce legitimacy	NFP, NCDM		0.7	0	80	20
Urgency	Prioritization of urgent matters improves legitimacy	NFP, NCDM, Natura	18	6.9	7	89	4
Presenting alternatives	Presenting and considering (feasible) alternatives improves legitimacy	NFP, NCDM, FSDM, Metso, participatory planning	1, 17	6.6	48	39	13
Public deliberation	Public deliberation of good quality improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP, Natura, participatory planning	1, 9, 19, 21, 27	13.1	16	69	15

^{a)} FSDM=forest sector decision-making in general, NCDM=nature conservation decision-making in general, NFP=National Forest Program, Natura=Natura 2000, Metso=Programme on the Protection Southern Finland's Forests

The most common decision rules in the data were the arguments referring to consensus and compromise. Many arguments presented consensus and unanimity as positive ideals that, if attained, provide a strong legitimacy for a decision. The broad agreement was presented as a close equivalent to consensus. The variants of the consensus argument made reference to entire population, the political parties, the informal interest groups participating in process, or the decision-making of the government. The performance evaluations that used consensus rule were more often positive than negative.

The principle of consensus was also presented negatively in some less common arguments; these criticized “watered-down political compromises” and admired “strict” non-compromising decision-making. A counter-argument presented the non-compromising political style in decision-making processes as illegitimate.

A bit different but associated line of argument was not focused on the formal decision-making processes but defended the actively conflictive style of political participation in general, that is e.g. direct action and verbal provocation. However, it appeared to be difficult to directly legitimize the act of opening the conflict in public – the motivation seemed to be presented rather as a response to external activity than internal decision. A more common line of argument perceived conflicting political behavior, often associated with extremism, as illegitimate. Another version of this argument underlined that the political style of political processes should be conciliatory and should actively avoid contradictions and search for compromise between parties.

The data included a considerable number of arguments that applied the principle of majority rule. The majority rule examples typically made reference to the opinions or interests of the majority of Finns in order to revise or defend some policy. It was not seldom that the arguments were backed up with survey studies. Also, the informal interest groups justified their right to influence by alleged representation of majority or their interest and by a large number of members. Variants of this principle refer to general public opinion or to “many people”. The dominance by vocal minority was opposed. The perceived dominance structures in decision-making, reported above, were often

evaluated as illegitimate in the context of the majoritarian ideal.

- (20) The situation is favorable for additional forest conservation: the forests have grown well and, according to a survey study, 86% [the majority] of Finns are willing to increase the conserved forest area. (Environmental organization, HS 22.9.2003)

There was some disagreement about what decision rule the decision-making process actually ought to use. For example, there was discussion if the Metso conservation committee was intended to apply consensus or majority principle as a decision rule. Respectively, the legitimacy of decisions was challenged by the nature conservationists who perceived that the majority should be reserved for pro-forestry actors and that redefined the decisions while the others looked forward to reach an unanimous consensus.

Two exceptions that presented the majority rule differently were found. The first claimed that the decisions based on public opinion are illegitimate because this opinion is based on limited or wrong knowledge. The second refers to alleged people’s alienation from nature, especially in the case of urban and young populations, who it was claimed put forward unrealistic demands and ideological views. Another form of assumed alienation is related to the forest owners’ alienation from their forest holding and decent silviculture. All these knowledge-related arguments served somewhat as delegitimization of majority or other uninformed opinions and justified the distribution of more “valid” information and silvicultural extension work to forest owners.

The rights of minorities were discussed relatively briefly. The most commonly mentioned groups were the Sámi people and the countryside population in general.

The proper schedule in the decision-making process was associated with the legitimacy of the process. Not surprisingly, those who were for the forthcoming substantial decisions, such as for increased activity in forestry or for nature conservation, tried to speed up the process and those who were against tried to postpone decisions. The unnecessary delaying of processes was perceived as illegitimate. The performance evaluations using this argument were almost always negative. The proper speed of decision-making

was also found to be an important principle in assessing the public government and courts (however, these are not topics of this study).

- (21) One problem emerged in the seminar was the speed of the process [NFP]. Because the draft was completed on 2 November 1998 it is relatively difficult to evoke broad discussion prior to it proceeding to the executive group on 10 December. (Environmental organization, NFP 8.10.1998)

The principle of non-arbitrariness was also mentioned as a one preferred procedural rule in the decision-making process. The major idea here was that processes should be based on stated rules rather than contingent, discretionary, and indeterminate decisions. This argument was linked to the principles of legality and openness introduced above.

4.3.4 Output Characteristics of Political Results

The output dimension of legitimacy refers here to the democracy-related outputs of political processes. In addition to democratic principles, a number of extra-democratic output-oriented principles, such as welfare-, distributive justice-, and sustainability-related principles were found but it was not possible to include them in this report. Democratic output legitimacy was found to be comprised of accountability, responsibility, cooperation, commitment, contracting, trust, credibility, responsiveness, the possibility to appeal, comprehensiveness, and understandability (see Table 9).

Accountability and responsibility were found to be relatively frequent principles of democratic legitimacy. In general, accountability referred to

Table 8. Democratic throughput legitimacy of forest-related decision-making (frequency, % of all and performance, % of each pattern).

Pattern	Statement	Objects ^{a)}	Examples	Frequency, %	of which performance, %		
					+	-	+/-
Consensus, legitimate	Consensus on decision improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM, NFP, Metso		6.3	64	29	7
Consensus, illegitimate	Compromising on decision-making reduces legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM, Natura		1.3	0	89	11
Conciliatory orientation	Conciliatory political participation and policy-making improves legitimacy	NCDM		5.5	8	86	6
Conflictive orientation	Conflictory political participation improves legitimacy	NCDM		1.6	27	9	64
Majority rule	Majority decisions improve legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM	20	4.8	28	53	19
Majority uninformed	Majority decisions reduce legitimacy because of the public's limited knowledge	NCDM, FSDM		1.6	27	45	28
Majority alienated	Majority decisions reduce legitimacy because of the public's alienation from nature	FSDM, NCDM		3.0	70	30	0
Minority rights	Safeguarding of minority rights /preferences improves legitimacy	NCDM, Metso		2.1	21	71	8
Proper schedule	Proper schedule in decision-making process improves legitimacy	Natura, NFP, NCDM	10, 21	3.4	9	91	0
Non-arbitrariness	Non-arbitrariness of political processes improves legitimacy	Natura, NCDM		1.8	8	92	0

^{a)} FSDM=forest sector decision-making in general, NCDM=nature conservation decision-making in general, NFP=National Forest Program, Natura=Natura 2000, Metso=Programme on the Protection Southern Finland's Forests

the popular control of decision-makers. The arguments related directly to accountability, in the sense that rulers can be removed, were discussed mostly in terms of elections in this data. Arguments by politicians that presented and shot down alternatives related to forest issues were also relatively common in the data, especially before the elections.

A different line of argument, still related to accountability, referred rather to moral responsibility than the formal accountability of those in power. Responsibility in general was one of the broadest classes of arguments that demanded responsibility from a large number public and private power holders from top to bottom. It was also relatively common to accuse some actors, such as decision-makers of forest regime, forest industry, or environmental actors of being irresponsible.

(22) I wish now that, first of all, the decision-makers would be responsible and understand the matters. Natura, combined with other conservation programs, does not solve anything at all. (Environmental organization, NFP 16.4.1998)

Arguments promoting cooperation as an ideal were very common in data. Virtually no arguments that challenged the idea of cooperation were found but there was some debate on how well the processes and actors perform in practice. A variant of this argument referred to constructive policy-making or discourse. Cooperation was referred to both as a precondition and as a rule that should be applied during decision-making process and practical common activities outside policy-making were also mentioned occasionally. However, the most typical argument promoted cooperation as a central value for future decision-making.

(23) A balance between the public and private sectors has to be sought all the time and many tensions and disagreements need to be managed. The forest policy-making through the National Forest Program in the future will demand more and more activity and cooperativeness by different parties. (Public official of forest administration, HS 14.8.2003)

The principle of commitment refers to the ability to make collectively binding decisions. The basic form was that all parties should commit

themselves to the decisions made in process. The variants demanded commitment by government officials and different private actors. It appears to be that the commitment of all participated parties was an important source of legitimacy for the processes. One form of commitment arguments referred to writers' interpretations concerning commitment to international agreements, such as EU-decisions and international environmental processes. A typical argument backed up demands of commitment with some variant of sustainability arguments; note that commitment to international agreements overlaps the international legality argument above.

(24) In the planning of natural resources use, we have been increasingly committed to openness and the improvement of citizens' possibilities to influence the decisions. [...] The welfare impacts can be achieved only if the actors in the forest sector are committed to the program. (Organization of land-owners, VL 2/1999)

However, relatively many texts focused on making excuses why the writer has justified the lack of commitment to a process of his/her organization after the process has ended. One line of argument was related to demands to keep promises that had been given during the process: if the other parties had not kept their promises, this was supposed to justify withdrawal from agreement.

Contracts made between public and private actors were perceived to improve legitimacy. The contracts were mostly discussed in the context of voluntary conservation contracts in the Metso program.

Trust in the involved to governmental officials or among the participants of process was mentioned as a legitimacy-improving principle. Trust here is understood as a relation between people while belief in the decency of processes is here called credibility; the latter was found to be a more common legitimacy argument in this data.

According to the principle of responsiveness, the demands of citizens or "general public opinion" should be taken into account in the outcome of process. Another version of the responsiveness argument claimed that input by interest groups that participated as invited parties in processes or by civic groups participating in seminars or processes should be taken into account.

Table 9. Democratic output legitimacy of forest-related decision-making (frequency, % of all and performance, % of each pattern).

Pattern	Statement	Objects ^{a)}	Examples	Frequency, %	of which performance, %		
					+	-	+/-
Accountability	Political accountability (through elections) improves legitimacy	NFP, FSDM, NCDM		3.1	29	14	57
Responsibility	Moral responsibility of decision-makers improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP	5, 22	11.8	19	68	13
Cooperation	Enhanced (constructive) cooperation improves legitimacy	FSDM, NCDM, NFP, Natura, Metso	9, 23, 27	5.5	22	22	56
Commitment to outcomes	Commitment of participating actors to outcomes of processes improves legitimacy	NFP, Metso, NCDM, participatory planning		3.9	31	23	46
Commitment to contracts	Commitment of participating actors to contracts improves legitimacy	NFP, NCDM, Metso	24	1.5	50	20	30
Public – private contracting	Public – private contracting improves legitimacy	NCDM, Metso		1.8	0	92	8
Trust	Trust between actors improves legitimacy	NCDM, FSDM		1.0	14	71	15
Credibility	Political processes' quality of being believed improves legitimacy	NFP, Natura, FSDM, NCDM		3.6	29	46	25
Responsiveness to input	Output of process corresponds with input by people or general public opinion	NCDM, NFP, FSDM, Natura	14	1.6	36	45	19
Responsiveness to participation	Participation affects the outcome of the political process	NFP, participatory planning, FSDM	13, 25	2.1	29	43	28
Possibility of appeal	Possibility to complain about decisions improves legitimacy	Natura	26	4.2	29	68	3
Comprehensiveness	Broad scope in decision-making improves legitimacy	FSDM, NFP, NCDM, Natura	27	4.0	56	22	22
Understandability	Understandable presentation improves legitimacy	NFP, Natura	26	3.4	4	57	39

^{a)} FSDM=forest sector decision-making in general, NCDM=nature conservation decision-making in general, NFP=National Forest Program, Natura=Natura 2000, Metso=Programme on the Protection Southern Finland's Forests

(25) If the citizen-initiated seminars have no response to the process, this proves that criticisms of the the National Forest Program's process character are justifiable. (Environmental organization, NFP 8.10.1998)

The mechanisms of appeal were perceived to improve legitimacy. These mechanisms were discussed in this corpus only in relation to the Natura

2000 program of which practical implementation of the appeals procedure was criticized more often than praised.

(26) By the beginning of June, the bureaucrats had received almost 15000 complaints about the famous Natura 2000 program. [...] The secrecy of preparation, many inaccuracies, and, first and foremost, the completely unsuccessful distribution

of information made the Natura fall flat. (Layman, TS 28.7.1997)

Comprehensiveness was also mentioned as a preferable outcome of political process. Typically this referred to the overall consideration of all objectives and the feasibility of the parts in the overall context of program. Comprehensiveness was also presented as the antithesis to the perceived one-sidedness and narrow agenda of “one issue movements”. The performance evaluations in terms of comprehensiveness were more often positive than negative.

(27) Also, every kind of cooperation concerning the forest nature has been increased and, at the same time, the ability of different interest groups to view forest more comprehensively and “through the eyes of the others” has increased, both from the point of view of timber production, and from economic and social point of view. (Public official of forest administration, 14.4.1998)

The principle that the political decisions ought to be understandable was applied in the evaluations. The clarity of language used in political decisions was mentioned as a condition for democracy. Also the openness of decisions made according to different interpretations was referred to as illegitimate policy-making. The non-clarity of rules and “grey areas” of legislation were also discussed; these things were associated with a potential arbitrariness. A number of arguments that referred to the understandability of political decisions were couched in terms of informational reasonability, internal consistency, and means-ends-rationality; however, they cannot be described in detail in the available space of this article.

5 Discussion

This study explored the democratic legitimacy of forest-related decision-making. To summarize, democratic legitimacy was an important source of (il)legitimacy in the public discussion. The evaluations concerning democratic legitimacy were found to be common in the readers’ letters since more than half of the texts (51–91%) included

an argument that fell into this category (Table 3). Hurrelmann et al. (2005a, 2005b) and Schneider et al. (2007) also found that democracy was a common source of legitimation of governmental institutions in the United Kingdom, The United States, Germany, and Switzerland.

This study also explored performance evaluations of actual decision-making processes. The negative performance evaluations were two times more frequent than positive ones. Hurrelmann et al. (2005a, 2005b) and Schneider et al. (2007) also found a similar tendency among most countries but not as strong as in this study. It is unclear whether this should be interpreted as a sign of the illegitimacy of the regime or as a characteristic of public discourse in readers’ letters, which focused rather on criticizing than praising the public policy-making (cf. Schneider et al. 2007: 138–143). This assumption is supported by the observation that the performance evaluations of the NFP’s comments were less negative.

The study also focused on identifying the principles that are used in the evaluation of forest related decision-making processes. Altogether, more than 40 principles were found. Many of principles frequent in the data are also typically present in the most prominent literature on democracy while some important findings are much less known (see below).

It is important to note that the results apply mostly to public discourse and it is not clear if the analysis of private discourse or individual anonymous evaluations collected for example by surveys would produce similar results. Further studies should explore how the evaluated policy sector and the social context of discourse, such as publicity, anonymity, or off-record discussion, may affect the selection of principles, as well as the potential differences between social groups or different cultures.

The data of this study, the readers’ letters have been selected by the editors and therefore they should not be interpreted as representing public opinion as such. Richardson (1997: 151–153) maintains that the writers of published letters have been found to be older, better educated, wealthier, and more politically conservative than their fellow newspaper readers. There was no information available to make such exact comparisons in this study but at least both large and small environmental organizations that

probably represent the central organized groups of citizens who are against the mainstream appeared to be relatively well represented especially in the biggest paper, 'Helsingin Sanomat'. In contrast to the abovementioned expectations, the participation of representatives of the forest industries and professional organizations was almost non-existent in the data. The newspapers represented different audiences, which can be expected to improve the representativeness of different points of view and the principles applied in argumentation. The benefit of using readers' letters as data is that the researcher has no influence on the production of the data.

The analysis on how the discussants understand the conceptions of democracy showed significant similarities to previous studies of democracy. Even though Beetham (1994:26) maintains that "to ask people what they understand democracy to mean, although an interesting exercise in itself, would be unlikely to provide any clear or consistent criteria for an audit" an empirical study of discussion on democratic legitimacy seem to actually produce a largely similar but longer list of principles as more theoretical approaches. This, of course, applies only when the whole body of empirical data is considered – the arguments in single texts are much more fragmentary.

No serious disagreements on the meaning or patterns (sources) of democracy were found in the data. Even though there were some disagreements of whether the international and EU legislation are valid sources of legitimacy and if direct action is a legitimate or illegitimate form of participation, the patterns of democracy were found to be more shared than was expected. This is in contrast with the discussion of democracy as an essentially contested concept (e.g. Saward 2003, Norris 1999, and Hurrelmann et al. 2007). However, this result may apply more to public discussion than private discussions or opinions. A study based on the interviews of organized forest policy actors showed significant differences among actors: the forestry actors preferred parliamentary democracy while the environmental actors preferred more direct forms of participation (Rantala 2004).

This empirical study found more principles than would have been expected by the analysis of theories. The political theorization has been ambitiously focused on forming general theories

on legitimacy, by a direct intellectual jump into a coherent system of values that would apply in all contexts, both in micro and macro scales, and independently of cultural belief systems. Most theoretical studies appear to operate with a much shorter list of principles; this is probably because it is difficult to reach coherency between even limited amounts of principles. These shorter lists provide a more limited understanding of the variety of real life legitimation arguments (some of the most comprehensive theory-induced lists can be found in Beetham 1994 and in Saward 1994). Apparently, if the principles of several theoretical studies are put together this increases the probability of covering more of the arguments that are applied in real life discussion. However, without empirical studies, it is impossible to know which of the theoretical ideas may have some importance for citizens and which are insignificant for the perceived legitimacy.

Also, in comparison with the most essential qualitative studies (Hurrelmann et al. 2005a and 2005b, Schneider et al. 2007), the list of the principles of democratic legitimacy that were found in this study was markedly longer and, on the average, there were also more arguments in each text. The major explanation is that in this exploratory study the analysis included any argument on democratic legitimacy that was associated with forest sector decision-making while the studies mentioned above were focused only on the key institutions of regime at the national level. In other words, the interpretation of democratic legitimacy here was the broadest possible. Future analyses may narrow the number of arguments that are included in the examination of democratic legitimacy if needed. In the prominent studies of democracy (e.g. Easton 1965, Dahl 1998), some of the democratic principles are tacitly understood as meta-level principles. The meta level principles include minimal level trust and the ability to make binding decisions; here these have been listed with other principles found in the data.

The support for democracy was in general found to be as strong (Table 4) in the same way as in other Finnish studies (Sänkiäho 2006) and in many other studies done on western countries (Norris 1999). Counter-democratic dominance structures have been commonly discussed in studies of democracy; for instance Dahl (1989 and

1998) has carefully analyzed and rejected alternatives to democracy. In the data, the participation of experts was supported more than it was opposed and it was often seen to be supplementary to democracy. There was significant criticism against the perceived domination by extremists or counter-democratic ideologies. On the one hand, these arguments can be interpreted as reflecting indirect support for democracy or western values in general, on the other hand, e.g. the references to dictatorship serve as an easy source of illegitimacy that can be used as negative presentation of political opponents (cf. van Dijk 1998: 261). The dominance of elites, administration, technology, and environmental NGOs were also mentioned relatively often as illegitimate. In comparison with many other studies (e.g. "legitimation crises" theories, see Hurrelmann et al. 2005b, Schneider 2007 et al. 2007) and the general political discussion in at least European countries, surprisingly little discussion concerning the dominance by big companies and economic interest groups over democracy was found in the data.

The most essential difference concerning political participation between this study and general democracy studies is that our data focuses much less on elections, elected bodies, and representatives than most general democracy studies. Elections are not held to choose representatives for decision-making of forest issues but some discussion were found on parliamentary decision-making on forest policies (Table 5). Also, several other forms of participation were discussed. The legitimacy of direct action and the campaigning of environmental NGOs were the only forms of participation that had a divergence of opinions. The criticism of parliamentary decision-making, associated with traditional values and corporatism that have been discussed by many democracy studies were not found in this data but criticism of parliamentary actors was relatively common. Civic organizations' internal democracy and responsiveness were discussed but almost no discussion was found about the importance of organizations' democracy for society's overall democracy. The "models of democracy" approach (Held 1987/1996, Bekkers and Edwards 2007) was considered for the organization of results concerning the forms of participation but this was rejected because no clear models were found.

In comparison to the seminal studies of legitimacy by Weber (1914/1968), the decision-making was seldom justified by traditions in this data while modernity was more often seen as a source of legitimacy. Charismatic personalities and religious ideologies were presented rather as sources of illegitimacy than sources of legitimacy, though these arguments were rare (cf. Schneider et al. 2007 who found that religious arguments were applied in legitimization in the USA).

Almost all studies of democracy discuss political rights in some way and not seldom the liberal-democratic rights have been used as a proxy of democracy in general, often following the influential studies by Freedom House (2003). In this study, these kinds of general values were separated into their own group, entitled core regime principles (Table 6); this classification appears to do justice to the different nature of these arguments. The separation of "regime values" by Easton (1965: 194–200) and "basic freedoms" by Saward (1994: 16) are also closely similar approaches. This class also includes here national and international legality, which are prerequisites for the democracy (Abromeit and Stoiber 2007).

Three classes of forerunnership arguments were found relatively frequently in the data. However, forerunnership has been much less typical principle for other legitimacy studies; it has been discussed by Lundqvist (2004) but not by many other studies. The emphasis on forerunnership may be a country or sector specific argument, in this case related to the importance of the forest sector and forests for Finland, as it is dependent on the export incomes of forest industry products. Although good international standing may be a principle that is more typical for small countries it was also found by Hurrelmann et al. (2005a, 2005b) in bigger nations. Good national standing may be an argument that is specific to certain policy sectors, such as the forest sector. The arguments for forerunnership and good international standing can also be considered to be classified in the category of support for a political community or as extra-democratic arguments. In any case, the performance evaluations using these patterns were much more often positive than the average evaluations.

This study applied the divide of input, throughput, and output legitimacy. It is more typical for legitimacy studies to follow Scharpf (1999) and

separate only two dimensions, namely the input and output. In this analysis, the separation of throughput dimension seems to have furthered the understanding that different perceptions of decision rules may exist (cf. Bekkers and Edwards 2007).

Many principles of input legitimacy (Table 7) can be found in almost any study of democracy. The central principles of input legitimacy include the popular sovereignty, voice to people, popular participation, and openness. These principles are close to the notion of "government by the people" (Scharpf 1999). The principle of urgency is regularly mentioned in democracy studies but it is typically discussed only momentarily. Considering the importance of the urgency principle in this data, it has probably not been examined sufficiently. The demand that different alternatives are presented and considered in policy-making is not very typical for democracy studies.

This study also found a large number of principles that define the quality of public deliberation: there were at least 30 principles that were more or less regularly used in the evaluation of rationality, fairness, and reliability of information. There is no room here for detailed analysis but it can be said that the deliberative quality of democracy seem to be in a way embedded in the discussion of democracy and it should be understood rather as a part of democracy than a complementary form of democracy (cf. the review of Delli Carpini et al. 2004 on deliberative democracy).

The decision rules (Table 8) have been discussed intensively in the democracy literature (e.g. Dahl 1989, Bekkers and Edwards 2007) wherein the discussion on decision rules has been mostly related to voting systems but also has been concerned whether the nature of democracy should be consensual or non-consensual. In this study, the consensus and majority rules were found to be the most prominent decision rules while there was less discussion on the rights of minorities or veto rights (cf. Abromeit and Stoiber 2007). An uninformed public was mentioned as justification to make an exception to the majority rule and to enlighten the public. The latter argument is close to the principle of opportunity for enlightened understanding (see Dahl 1998: 37). A proper schedule and non-arbitrariness of decision process were also added to the throughput category by this study.

The study showed that it might be unclear to actors that make legitimacy evaluations what decision rule the evaluated decision-making process actually meant to apply. There seem also to be different understanding of the ideals of consensus and compromising: some take them for granted while the others appreciate strictness and a non-compromising attitude to political action. The latter position may be associated with ideological commitments, such as environmentalism; this should be explored more in the further studies.

The democratic output legitimacy was here understood only through certain principles that were found as outputs or outcomes of the democratic decision-making processes in the texts. The principles of accountability and moral responsibility of decision-makers as well as responsiveness (Table 9) have been noticed by almost every study of democracy. The former have sometimes, however, been understood as a part of input legitimacy (e.g. Hurrelmann et al. 2005a). Responsiveness is especially close to the democratic idea of "government for the people" (Scharpf 1999). The commitment to binding decisions, cooperation, and trust has been often understood as principles that, at least at the minimal level, underline all forms of democracy. Trust was discussed much less in this data than it was by previous Finnish studies (Rantala and Primmer 2003, Kyllönen et al. 2006). The credibility of the political process, comprehensiveness, possibility of appeal, and understandability have been discussed less in the previous studies but found to be common in this data. The two latter principles were also commonly applied in the evaluations of public administration.

6 Conclusions

The results of this study can be applied in the identification of agreement and differences concerning values among participants in policy processes. The principles that the study found can be used at least as a starting point in the planning of decision-making processes, such as national forest programs in the forest sector, especially in the explication of principles on which the processes should be based. The democratic principles are

also considered as important benchmarks in the evaluation studies of public policies and programs. The statements in Tables 4–9 can be applied as a starting point for coding lists for further qualitative studies concerning the democratic legitimacy in the forest sector and also in comparisons with other sectors. The statements presented in Tables 4–9 can be applied in the surveys concerning public attitude towards democratic processes in the forest sector. The principles revealed by the study serve as an important vocabulary for any actor involved with forest policy issues.

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