

Title: The Ecological turn unfolding: Norwegian wood and Swedish forests

In the 90s environmental policy took an ecological turn. Biodiversity and ecological health were recognized as critical issues which effected policy and legislation on national and international scale. In this paper we trace the development that has followed from this shift. We conduct an historical institutionalist analysis of Norway and Sweden with a particular focus on ecosystem- and biodiversity management in the forest sector. Norway and Sweden are two countries that have had a strong environmental profile, and that have been identified as front-runners in environmental policy over the later decades. In that respect they were both good recipients for the ecological turn, and therefore suitable cases for tracing its impacts.

The analysis targets changes in the key principles – the logic – underpinning political, administrative, and science-based processes. As concerns for ecosystem and biodiversity was implemented the demand for measuring and knowing states of nature emerged. The policy development over the last three decades is characterized by a search for better and more “objective” measures of states of nature, including measurements of the environmental effects of forestry, as well as of the protective measures (naturhänsyn) taken by the industry. This means that conflicting interest and perspectives between timber production and environmental protection play out as knowledge disputes. We identify an inherent tension within the ecological turn between controllability and protection of nature. This tension requires conscious and continuous consideration. How this tension is managed will determine the effects of the ecological turn.

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