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Author(s):
Lanly, Jean-Paul

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Jean-Paul Lanly

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Series Editor: Prof. Dr. Franz Schmithüsen, Department of Environmental Sciences
E-mail: franz.schmithuesen@env.ethz.ch

Abstract

A few outstanding American foresters and conservationists were instrumental in the incorporation of forestry into the mandate of the Food and Agriculture Organization, which was created in 1945 as one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. A brief presentation of the machinery governing FAO helps understanding how member countries can exert influence on its forestry policies and programs. Factors of influence include the relative size of the statutory contribution of the country, its extra-budgetary contribution in the form of "funds-in-trust," its expertise in the relevant field, the importance it attributes to this part of the mandate of FAO, and its location. Here, the influence of Europe and the United States at FAO is tracked through time: prior to 1945 and the decision to include forestry in FAO mandate; from 1945 to 1951, when the headquarters was moved from Washington to Rome; from the early 1950s to the early 1970s and the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment; and then up until 2000. This historical review shows that through active participation in its governing and statutory bodies, western European countries have had a more direct involvement in forestry at FAO and a much larger representation in its Secretariat and extra-budgetary contributions, whereas the United States has exerted influence through the work of individuals, universities, and research groups and, more generally, thanks to the importance and diversity of its forestry expertise.

Content

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Jean-Paul Lanly

1. Introduction

The Food and Agriculture Organization was created in 1945 as one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations. Although FAO's primary objective is to contribute to food security worldwide, it is of interest also to foresters and conservationists because its mandate included forestry from the very beginning—a decision that, as we shall see below, had to be fought through.

The constituency of FAO, consisting in 2005 of 188 member countries and the European Community, directs its policies and activities through a governing structure that is somewhat complex and hierarchical, given the broad and worldwide mandate of the institution. The Conference, in which all members are represented, is the supreme governing body and meets every second year. The FAO Council, composed of 49 member countries, none of them permanent, acts as an executive organ, meeting at least four times between regular Conference sessions. The Council is assisted by its Programme and Finance Committees and "sectoral" committees, such as the Committee on Forestry. Farther down in the organizational structure are subsidiary and advisory bodies (the other "statutory" bodies and the panels of experts), whose discussions can be more fully and efficiently held on matters particular to a geographic region (e.g., the FAO European and North American Forestry Commissions, or the "Silva Mediterranea" Committee) or theme (e.g., the FAO Advisory Committee on Paper and Wood Products).

Like most organizations, FAO has two main components: its governing "machinery," which we have sketched above, and its Secretariat, or staff. The basic relationship between these two components can be presented schematically as follows: the staff prepares Secretariat papers to assist the governing and statutory bodies in their deliberations, conclusions, and recommendations, and in return takes action on such recommendations and is accountable to the governing bodies. The terms and balances of this interaction depend on the matters at stake and on the persuasiveness of the Secretariat. On most forestry issues, whether of a policy or a technical nature, the proposals of the FAO Secretariat are generally endorsed but always subject to evaluation and review, sometimes with amendments. This outcome is due primarily to the experience, wisdom, and self-restraint exercised by the Secretariat. However, particularly on politically sensitive issues about which consensus is difficult if not impossible to reach, FAO is not allowed to propose a position, let alone serve as a forum for its members. A classic example of such issues in forestry was the international instrument on forests (the so-called Forest Convention)[1] in the early 1990s.

[1]. As early as 1990, the FAO Forestry Department was instructed not to work and make any proposal on this issue, despite the comprehensive and unique knowledge and expertise it could bring to bear on the subject and the neutral forum it constituted. A determined minority of member countries had decided that the matter should not be raised at all, and later, a majority of them wanted it discussed at the level of the UN Economic and Social Council, with the eventual lack of success we know.

Source: Sample V.A. and Anderson S., Eds 2008: Common Goals for Sustainable Forest Management – Divergence and Reconvergence of American and European Forestry, 300-319.

2. Factors of influence

The above description of the FAO system helps in understanding how member countries, either individually or collectively, can exert influence on forest policies at FAO. In this regard, the exact wording of the title of this paper is important: if it had read "European and US influence on *FAO* forest policy(ies)," or "on forest policy(ies) *in* FAO," it could have led to two misinterpretations arising from the fact that most people equate FAO solely with its Secretariat: first, that the Secretariat and not the whole "FAO system" has policies of its own; second and correlatively, that to have an influence, a given country or group of countries needs only to exert it on the Secretariat. In fact, the influence of countries on forest policy(ies) adopted by FAO derives mainly from their ability to have their proposals and positions endorsed by the organization's governing bodies.

The say which countries have in the recommendations of these bodies, and hence in influencing sector policies, depends on various factors. First, and most important, is the relative size of their contribution to the budget of the organization (its budgetary funding). Although the "one country, one vote" rule prevails in the UN system, there is in reality, of course, some relationship between, on one hand, the importance of a country or group of countries measured in terms of gross domestic product—and hence its statutory contribution to a UN agency like FAO—and, on the other hand, its influence in that agency and on the policies it adopts. The statutory contribution of the United States to the budgetary funding of FAO (i.e., to its regular, or "normative", program) has remained by far the highest of all countries, though its percentage of the organization's budget has decreased from 33 percent in 1945 to 22 percent at present.[2]

In theory, the size of contribution, especially in the case of large contributors, also has an influence on the nationalities of professional staff at the Secretariat, through the recruitment system by quotas. However, for various reasons, the number of US citizens among FAO professionals at headquarters and in the regional offices, particularly in the forestry field, has always been lower, not to say much lower, than what the contribution of their country would have allowed. Among western European countries, Germany has remained throughout in the same position as the United States, whereas France, the United Kingdom, Belgium, and the Netherlands have always been well represented.

Another direct factor of influence has come with the development of the "multibilateral," extrabudgetary funding—those funds entrusted by donor countries to FAO, in addition to their statutory contribution to its budgetary funding—for the execution of specific normative or field activities, and for the positioning of junior, or less junior, experts to help implement them.[3] Several European countries, particularly the Nordic nations, the Netherlands, and Italy and to a lesser extent Belgium, France, Germany, and Switzerland, have thus contributed from the early 1970s to forestry projects and programs designed jointly with the Secretariat. Much funding has thus been channelled by European countries to important global FAO programs, particularly those on community forestry and on forest resources assessment, whereas the United States has had no trust funds with FAO in forestry.

The relative influence of US and European countries on forest policy at FAO has remained, at least indirectly, a function of their experience and knowledge in the various forestry fields,

[2]. After the United States, the main contributors in 2005 were Japan (19.6 percent), Germany (9.8 percent), France (6.5 percent), the United Kingdom (5.6 percent), and Italy (5.1 percent). The 25 countries of the European Union together accounted for 38.0 percent.
[3]. Hence, the denomination of "funds-in-trust," or trust funds.

and the results of the relevant research and study work carried out by their institutions. Both sides of the Atlantic have had their comparative advantages in this respect.

The long and institutionalized experience of France and the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Germany, in tropical regions gave them a certain degree of superiority over the United States until the mid-1960s, notwithstanding the significant work on tropical forests carried out at the International Institute of Tropical Forestry in Puerto Rico and by American ecologists like Leslie Holdridge and Eugene Odum and foresters like Tom Gill, Frank Wadsworth, and Larry Hamilton. The European countries, which were still colonial powers during the first years of FAO, were the depository of the largest body of forestry knowledge and experience in the humid and dry tropics across Africa, Asia, the Pacific, and the Caribbean and had their own tropical forestry research and education institutions: Imperial Forestry Institute at Oxford, Centre Technique Forestier Tropical at Nogent-sur-Marne near Paris, Gembloux and Louvain Universities in Belgium, Wageningen University in the Netherlands, and the Federal Research Center for Forestry and Forest Products in Hamburg, among others.

The gap in knowledge and experience in tropical forestry disappeared gradually with the increase in work by US research groups and think tanks on the subject, the establishment of international forestry groups at the US Forest Service and the US Agency for International Development, and the growing number of American foresters with tropical experience, particularly in Latin America. The positioning of the United States was reinforced by the advocacy work of large American NGOs in tropical forest conservation. However, its influence in this field was exerted essentially on the relevant policies of the US-based international funding institutions—the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the UN Development Programme.

Though the conservation and development of forests and other wooded lands was never a top priority for the governments of the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, and hence for international funding agencies, FAO has always devoted some attention to North Africa and the Near East, particularly in the early years, from the 1950s to the mid-1970s. The United States, despite its long involvement in the Near East and its experience of similar climatic and ecological conditions at home, never actively supported or tried to influence FAO policy and fieldwork in this part of the world. On the contrary, European countries, especially those more directly concerned and bordering the Mediterranean Sea, like France, and to a lesser extent Italy and Spain, were always the ones to propose and fund initiatives in this region.

On temperate and boreal forestry, the relative influence of the United States (together with Canada) and of European countries on policies at FAO and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) has remained equally essential, particularly through the work of the UNECE Timber Committee and the European Forestry Commission (and their secretariat, the Joint FAO-UNECE Division in Geneva) and, to a lesser extent, of the North American Forestry Commission. This was the more so as the Soviet Union, though a member of UNECE, never joined FAO. (As of this writing, Russia had not yet joined.)

If we look at the relative strength and influence by forestry subject rather than on an eco-regional basis, both sides of the Atlantic appear somewhat equal, though there is of course more institutional dispersion in Europe, and some comparative advantage of the United States in some fields like forest economics and, until the 1980s, information technology (particularly remote sensing).

Many other factors determine the influence of the United States and the European countries on forest policies at FAO. Two more are worth mentioning at the end of this brief account. The first one is the different relative importance given by those countries to FAO's forestry mandate. The United States, as well as France, the United Kingdom, and other western European countries—and later on, the European Community as a member organization of FAO from 1991—always gave overwhelming priority to the policies and activities at FAO in the fields of agriculture *stricto sensu* (including trade in agricultural products) and nutrition. However, other European countries—the Nordic group and the western-central European countries (Germany, Austria, and Switzerland)—have always paid special attention to forestry at FAO.

The other factor in the relative influence of the United States and European countries has been the location of FAO headquarters. In the first six years of its existence, from 1945 to 1951, FAO was hosted in Washington.[4] During this period, as we shall see below, the situation and issues of the forestry sector in the United States were somewhat impinging on the work of the organization. This became much less the case after 1951, when FAO headquarters moved definitely to Rome,[5] where its mother organization, the International Institute of Agriculture, had been based before World War II. This move increased the synergy of headquarters staff with the FAO European Forestry Working Group and the UNECE in Geneva and, more generally, of FAO with the European member countries and their institutions and experts.

3. Until 1945: The origins of forestry in FAO

The International Institute of Agriculture (IIA), the predecessor of FAO, was created in Rome in 1905 as an intergovernmental organization. Its main object was, in the words of its promoter, David Lubin, an American businessman and agriculturalist, "to defend the interests of farmers against industrial or commercial trusts and cartels, which impose on them their tariffs, prices and their economic and financial conditions."[6] The institute survived World War I and was active until the early 1940s, with ties to the League of Nations. It organized the two first World Forestry Congresses, in Rome in 1926 and in Budapest in 1936. In accordance with a resolution of the Budapest congress, the International Forestry Center (Centre International de Sylviculture, CIS) was established within IIA but headquartered in Berlin, with a predominantly European membership. CIS published the forestry review *Intersylva* and amassed a large amount of data that were eventually transferred to FAO headquarters in Rome.

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[4]. The Forestry Division was first located at 1710 New Hampshire Avenue, Washington, DC, and later moved to the Longfellow Building on Connecticut Avenue.

[5]. The cover photograph of the *Unasylva* issue Volume 11(2) (1957), titled "Ten Years of Forestry in FAO," shows a view of Rome from the FAO terrace, and the caption reads, "… When it was decided that the permanent Headquarters of FAO should be in Rome, the Forestry Division emigrated en masse by ship from New York to Naples, which was not the least adventurous of the Division's undertaking."

[6] It is interesting to note what he wrote to Gifford Pinchot in 1908, 11 years before the creation of the League of Nations: "But humanlike you want to know my motive before you can trust me. Well, my motive is not salary, not medal, nor social scintillations, nor is it to be a Count of Sacramento. I wish to serve the dear old Uncle, Uncle Sasmuel, and you laugh! But how manya better man have given their lives for th Uncle. But there is a higher service still, and that is for the United States of the World. And I am happy to be a humble soldier, a private, in this Army. Do you understand? And when one is such in dead earnest, the Almighty does not mind that he is an ordinary scrub and no educated diplomat …" And in 1917, nine years later, in the midst of World War I, he wrote "An International Confederation of Democracies under a Constitution"!

In 1932, when the Great Depression threatened the forest interests of the Northern Hemisphere with collapse, the League of Nations' Economic Committee convened an international conference of timber experts in Geneva. Shortly afterward, the International Timber Committee (Comité International du Bois, CIB) was created, based in Vienna, with 15 European countries and the United States and Canada as members. Its main tasks were to collect and disseminate international timber statistics and facts dealing with timber supply and demand, to coordinate technical research, to collate and publish information on wood utilization, and to promote trade in timber. CIB also acted as secretariat to the European Timber Exporters Convention, whose members, all European (Austria, Czechoslovakia, Finland, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Sweden, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia), in 1935 signed an agreement fixing yearly quotas for their exports of sawn softwood. In the same year, at the initiative of France, the International Commission for Wood Utilization (Commission Internationale d'Utilisation du Bois, CIUB) was set up to act as a world clearinghouse for information on wood technology.

When preparations for the establishment of FAO began at the UN Conference on Food and Agriculture at Hot Springs, Virginia, in 1943, and the mandate of the new organization was initially considered, there was no mention of forestry except for a general reference in one recommendation for conserving land and water resources and, to that end, protecting forests and afforesting unprotected watersheds.

It was finally decided to include forestry within the mandate of FAO but only after a protracted, and most revealing, process, involving mostly US personalities. It started after the Hot Springs Conference, with a meeting of a small group of US foresters who decided to pursue the matter further: Tom Gill, who in 1950 would create the International Society of Tropical Foresters; Lyle Watts, chief of the US Forest Service; Henry Graves, long-time dean of the Yale School of Forestry and a former chief of the Forest Service who had succeeded Gifford Pinchot in 1910; plus members of the national Lumber Manufacturers' Association. The US secretary of Agriculture was reluctant, but Dean Acheson, then assistant secretary of State, was of a different opinion, as was President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Interim Commission on Food and Agriculture, which had been charged to follow up on the recommendations of the Hot Springs Conference and draft a constitution for FAO, set up in early 1944 the Technical Committee on Forestry and Primary Forest Products, whose recommendations were later included in its report. The committee was chaired by Henry Graves, and among the 11 other members were three US citizens—namely Lyle Watts, Tom Gill, and Walter Lowdermilk, a soil conservationist—in addition to one Canadian and European foresters. The committee stressed that FAO must go beyond "freedom from want of food" and that forest resources should be included "because there were close relationships between forestry and agriculture and because forestry could make an important contribution to an expanding world economy." Finally, the FAO founding Conference of Quebec in October 1945 endorsed the committee's recommendations and decided to include forestry in FAO's mandate.

4. 1945–1951: The first years in Washington

At the Quebec Conference, FAO had a constituency of 39 countries, of which 15 were from Latin America, ten from (western) Europe, and only four from Middle East, three from Asia (China-Taiwan, India, and the Philippines); only one, Liberia, was African (almost all the other African countries were still colonies or protectorates of France, the United Kingdom, Portugal, and Spain). At the end of the period, the countries numbered 69, of which 20 were from (western) Europe, 19 from Latin America, and 15 from Asia.

In the first year following the founding of FAO, a small Forestry and Forest Products Division was formed as one of the four substantive units. There were only seven officers at the start, with Marcel Leloup, formerly director-general of Waters and Forests in France, as director, a position he would hold until the beginning of 1959. In 1947, the division counted 17 officers in Washington, plus three who formed the Geneva-based European Working Group. Three officers of the 20 were US foresters (including the chief of the Forestry Branch, B.B. Show), and 13 were European (of whom five were French, including Marcel Leloup, Tony François, and René Fontaine in the Geneva group), with Egon Glesinger, an Austrian citizen, chief of the Forest Products Branch, who had been secretary-general of CIB until the early 1940s (he would succeed Leloup as head of the division in 1959).

Two years later, the staff in Washington was reduced from 17 to 13, but the European Working Group added two more officers, and two regional groups had been formed with two foresters each, based in Rio de Janeiro for Latin American, and in Bangkok for the Far East. As for the nationalities of the staff, there was one less from the United States (but one more Canadian) and four more Europeans.

The work of the division was guided by the Standing Advisory Committee on Forestry and Forest Products, which had taken over from the Technical Committee. It was chaired by Lyle Watts, then chief of the US Forest Service, and the vice chairman was Bernard Dufay, director-general of Waters and Forests in France. Among the 11 other members of the committee, there were three other US citizens (E.I. Kotok for research, Tom Gill for the "unexploited forests," and H. Mark on chemical wood industries) and five Europeans. Two years after, the committee has expanded to 22, with the same four US members but three more Europeans, four more representatives of developing countries (Latin America and Asia), and one each from Australia and New Zealand.

European foresters thus dominated the staff and the committee (it can be noted also that the composition of both entities was largely Caucasian). This "European bias" was less marked in terms of the issues addressed, however. If we look at the contents of Unasylva issues during this period, we observe a certain balance between subjects of concern to European countries, in particular how to meet their huge reconstruction needs for building material; those of priority for the United States, particularly soil conservation and development of the wood and pulp industries; and those concerning the rest of the world, in particular, the presentation of the results of the first World Forest Inventory and articles on forestry in tropical and Mediterranean countries and regions. It is symptomatic of that period that articles in this last category were written mostly by European tropical foresters, such as André Aubreville[7] of France and H.G. Champion of the United Kingdom, and to a lesser extent by US contributors, and not by nationals of these countries, even those that had long been independent, like the Latin American nations. We must await the second half of 1949 to see articles by Indian

[7] . He wrote the first article of the first issue of the journal, 1(1)(1947), the title of which is, "The Disappearance of the Tropical Forests of Africa."

foresters; by 1953, nationals from only two other developing countries, Brazil and Pakistan, had been published in the journal.

During this period, the two most important meetings in the field of conservation and forestry held by FAO, or with its strong involvement, are a good illustration of the balance in the "conceptual influence" of both sides of the Atlantic. The first event, organized by FAO in 1947 in Marianske Lazne, Czechoslovakia, was the International Timber Conference, which sought to address the huge wood deficit in Europe compounded by the decrease of supplies from traditional exporters to Europe (particularly the United States and the Soviet Union). The second event reflected a major US concern at that time: the UN Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources was held at Lake Success, New York, in 1949 in response to a proposal by President Truman to the UN Economic and Social Council, echoing a similar recommendation made at the turn of the century to President Theodore Roosevelt by Gifford Pinchot. One of the six technical sections of that conference was devoted to forestry; two others dealt with land resources and wildlife.

We find a similar balance of influence between Europe and United States in the themes of the statutory bodies established in these early years: the International Poplar Commission, created in 1947, the International Chestnut Commission,8 and the Mechanical Wood Technology and Wood Chemistry technical panels.

However, other elements demonstrate that European forestry and foresters already had, as a whole, a certain degree of prominence at FAO, or at least that European countries gave more importance than the United States to FAO's handling of forest issues. This was probably due, in part, to FAO's assumption in 1946 of the functions (and property) of both CIS and CIB, institutes that had been based in Europe and whose work had been heavily influenced by European foresters. Among these elements, two illustrate clearly this early European bias:

- the establishment in 1947 of the FAO European Forestry Commission, which preceded the North American one by 11 years; and
- the conversion in 1948 of the international European forestry association Silva Mediterranea, the oldest one after IUFRO, into an FAO committee, which became instrumental in developing forestry cooperation in the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East, with the southern European countries, particularly France, Italy, and later Spain, as main actors.

5. From the early 1950s to the early 1970s

Up to the early 1970s, the international scene in conservation and forestry, as in other sectors, was still simple, but it would become more and more complicated. FAO was the only worldwide intergovernmental institution with a normative program in forestry. The other intergovernmental actors with some interest in forestry, either in normative or in field activities, were few and cooperated within the limits of their respective mandates. They included UNESCO and its incipient Man and the Biosphere (MAB) program, coordinated by the Division of Ecological Sciences, and the multilateral funding agencies, such as the UN Development Programme and the World Bank, which relied on FAO for policy and technical

[8] . It was formally established in 1952, but talks about a need for an international society for chestnut were held already in 1950. In this period, chestnut trees suffered severely from the blight on both sides of the Atlantic. However, for this and other reasons, the economic significance of these species declined rapidly in the 1950s, and the commission did not survive long.

advice and assistance in this field. To a certain extent the same applied to the international conservation organizations, mainly the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN, now the World Conservation Union) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF, now the World-Wide Fund for Nature), as well as the few national ones (mostly American) with international interest in forest conservation. Forestry was not yet on the international political agenda, nor had it become a pet subject of the media. The views of competent national and international institutions were respected, if not agreed on, and not every activist or journalist was yet a self-proclaimed specialist. In this overall context, FAO was naturally recognized as the lead international agency, and could work peacefully and efficiently.

That is why the FAO foresters of the period who are still living consider this the golden age of international forestry at the organization. However, when we look back now, 40 to 50 years afterward, we realize the drawbacks of such a situation—drawbacks compounded by the limitations of the forestry profession in those days. One such limitation, which has been harped on over and over since then, almost ad nauseam and in a sometimes unfair and excessively dichotomous way, was that the profession was basically inward looking and not open to society and the public at large. This was aggravated by the reputation foresters had for behaving in an authoritative, "top-down," and punitive manner vis-à-vis or even against people, rather than in a participatory, "bottom-up," and supportive way. This accusation was not entirely unfounded, and much progress has been made since by the profession to correct its social approaches and its image.

The second limitation of the profession during this period, again seen through the eyes of today, is that it gave insufficient priority to the environmental dimension of forest management. Here, too, the picture is not strictly black and white. Foresters contend that they are the first true ecologists, who long ago coined the concept if not of sustainability, at least of "sustaining," even if it was under the restrictive label of "sustained yield." And most if not all FAO foresters of that period had environmental concerns in mind, as demonstrated in many ways. To mention just three, they developed a strong nature and wildlife conservation program at headquarters and the regional offices and in the field, with many projects for wildlife and protected area management in developing countries; they cooperated closely with UNESCO's Division of Biological Sciences in the design of the MAB program, and with IUCN and WWF, eventually leading to the World Conservation Strategy; and they were deeply involved in the preparations for the 1972 Stockholm Conference and in the creation of the UN Environment Programme.

However, it was also during that period that FAO, under the leadership of British economist Jack Westoby,9 forcefully and consistently promoted forest-based industries as a powerful means for tackling the problems of economic and social underdevelopment, perhaps without giving due consideration to the attendant land-use and sustainability aspects. Bilateral development agencies active in forestry also worked according to the same paradigm in the 1960s and early 1970s.

This period saw a regular increase in the number of professional forestry staff of European origin, at both headquarters and the regional offices, as well as a growing number of field projects. Belgian, British, Dutch, and French foresters with tropical or Mediterranean experience joined the organization. In the case of the first three nationalities, the process was facilitated by the fact that in the many newly independent African and Asian countries,

[9]. He was chief of the Forest Economics Branch from 1958 to 1963 and then became deputy director (of the Division/Department) until he retired in 1973.

national officers gradually replaced European colonial officers, who, not being civil servants of their mother country, were available to serve in international organizations in which their overseas experience was appreciated. European presence was also facilitated by the junior ("associate expert") schemes they financed, which gave their young officers an opportunity to work and in many instances later seek more permanent employment and stay with FAO. Through these schemes and their expertise in industrial forestry, the Nordic countries reinforced their presence. After Marcel Leloup left in 1959 and Egon Glesinger departed in1963, the division was led by N.A. Osara of Finland until 1968, and by B.K. Steenberg of Sweden until 1974. Germany and Switzerland, due especially to their junior scheme, and Spain, which was opening up, succeeded in making their presence felt in both the normative and the field programs.

Conversely, there were no more than two or three American foresters at headquarters and the regional offices, and very few served in the FAO field projects. However, studies and various papers began to be entrusted to US consultants and educational and research institutions, a trend that would develop rapidly in the following period, given the wealth of American expertise. And outside FAO, American conservation groups, think tanks, and universities started to influence the approach to forestry of the financing institutions based in Washington and New York, some of them (the UN Development Programme and the World Bank) funding the organization's field technical assistance activities.

There are at least two fields in which the United States had a definite influence, despite the country's small representation in the Secretariat: first, conservation in general, be it protected area and wildlife management, or soil conservation and watershed management; and second, tropical forestry. Thanks especially to foresters like Tom Gill and Frank Wadsworth, the country was instrumental in having FAO formalize and develop its normative work in the silviculture and management of tropical high forests through the Committee on Forest Development in the Tropics, which was established in the mid-1960s and would remain active until the early 1990s.

An important development during this period was the rapid growth of the field activities of the organization. Commencing in 1950 under the UN Expanded Technical Assistance Programme for economic development of underdeveloped countries, it was soon complemented in 1958 by the UN Special Fund, until both funding mechanisms merged and were consolidated into the UN Development Programme in 1965. At the end of the 1960s, FAO was running some 70 forestry and conservation field projects. The design and implementation of these projects at national and regional levels reflected to a large extent the policies adopted within the organization, and hence the relative influence of Europe and United States, not only because FAO was the executing agency but also because the policies of the recipient countries were directly inspired by the organization as well. However, with time, individual developing countries progressed in maturity and autonomy—which was, after all, the main goal—as did the UN Development Programme.

Experts in this era were mostly European, assisted by an increasing number of junior experts, a few were Canadian and Australian, and fewer still were American. There were already some experts from developing countries, mostly Latin America and India, and their total number increased significantly in the 1970s and 1980s. Industrial forest development—including forest plantations (with the attendant genetic improvement work10) and pulp and paper production—was the main objective of the field projects, with conservation and institutional

[10]. The FAO Panel of Experts on Forest Gene Resources was established in 1968 and has since advised the organization in its important work of coordination in this field.

strengthening (administration, policy and legislation, education,[11] and research) being secondary. Latin America and the Mediterranean and Middle East region were the main areas of concentration for FAO forestry and conservation field programs, with the second gradually losing importance to the benefit of tropical Asia and Africa.

Toward the end of this period, in 1970, four years after the establishment of the Fisheries Division, the Forestry and Forest Industries Division was upgraded to the departmental level. The number of FAO regular program forestry staff peaked at that time with some 60 professionals at headquarters and about ten in the regional offices, plus a few junior experts and "trust fund" officers. These figures look small in relation to the geographic and thematic extent of the FAO mandate in conservation and forestry. However, the organization constituted then, and still constitutes today, by far the largest international forestry secretariat.

6. From the early 1970s to 2000

In the early 1970s, higher priority was given to the protection of the environment by industrialized countries and the international community, as indicated by the UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 and the consequent creation of the UN Environment Programme. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the world became conscious of the serious problems affecting forests, mostly deforestation and forest degradation in the tropics,[12] with the consequent loss of biological diversity, and to a lesser extent, forest dieback attributed to air pollution of industrialized countries. Finally in the 1990s, the Rio Summit and its followup addressed global concerns about sustainability, conservation of biological diversity, and climate change. Forest conservation, rather than a more comprehensive sustainable forest development approach, came higher on the international political agenda. Forests and forest management came increasingly into the limelight and onto the international agenda—without, however, a proportional increase in real political will and official development aid.

All those changes should in principle have strengthened the forestry role of FAO as the only global intergovernmental organization with a comprehensive mandate in this field, even more so because the organization is also and primarily in charge of agriculture, the overwhelming cause of deforestation in developing countries. On the contrary, and somewhat paradoxically, forestry was weakened at FAO. The organization lost its de facto monopoly in international forestry, an evolution that reflects and parallels to a large extent a similar situation at the national level in the developed countries. On a subject that has become more prominent and even fashionable, every entity—be it a developed country, a group of countries, a governmental or nongovernmental organization, a group of individuals, or even a politician seeking a "comeback"—wants to be seen as taking action, irrespective of the work already done or being accomplished by existing competent institutions. This desire has spawned a proliferation of governmental and nongovernmental initiatives and bodies, some short-lived, others longer lasting. FAO, with its global and comprehensive mandate, was asked to take the lead in "streamlining," "harmonizing" and even "coordinating" this institutional mess, sometimes by those who themselves contributed to the confusion. It may even have happened

[11]. The FAO Advisory Committee on Forest Education was set up in the 1960s and met every second year until the early 1990s.
[12]. The beginning of that period of worldwide concern about tropical deforestation was marked, among other things, by the US Strategy Conference on Tropical Deforestation, organized jointly by the Department of State and the US Agency for International Development in Washington in June 1978.

that the organization was instructed to support the development of bodies that would become its direct competitors.13 The frustrating and Sisyphean work of coordination and reporting took a heavy toll on the limited resources of the organization, which seemed to be the only participant serious about achieving some degree of consistency.

For information and analysis concerning the world and their own region, European countries continued to rely on FAO, on the excellent cooperation between the organization and the UNECE and on the work of their joint division in Geneva within the framework of the European Forestry Commission, the Timber Committee, and their subsidiary bodies (an increasing number of countries benefited, of course, from the work of the European Union institutions). The European timber trends studies, the global forest resources assessments, and the temperate and boreal forest resources assessments were the most appreciated products. This is why European countries continued giving high priority to these studies in FAO programs. The United States maintained a similar stand but relied more on research from its own institutions and think tanks.

The support that the United States gave to FAO work on tropical forestry fell as it became clear that the subject could not be addressed on purely technical grounds. In the saga of the FAO/UNDP/World Bank/World Resources Institute14 Tropical Forestry Action Programme (TFAP), from the World Forestry Congress of Mexico in 1985 to the mid-1990s, the United States had a limited direct involvement, contrary to the western and Nordic European countries.15 If in 1990 the United States showed some inclination toward a legally binding instrument on tropical forestry, after the 1992 Rio Summit, unlike many European countries, it objected strongly and persistently to a forest convention that would be applicable to “all types of forests,” according to the expression used in the title of the Rio Forest Principles.16

During this period, European countries (the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, Italy, and to a lesser extent Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, and the European Community) supported in a substantial way some major FAO programs, through trust funds (and associate and other trust-funded officer positions). This is the case notably of the Forest Resources Assessment Programme and the popular Forests, Trees and People one (originally Forestry for Local Community Development). The case of the latter is interesting: although most of the financing came from Swedish and other European trust funds, its concepts17 of design and implementation draw heavily from the work and experience of the guild of American anthropologists and sociologists.

Officers originating from European countries continued to form the main group of the Forestry Department professional staff, but there was a significant increase over the entire period in the number of US foresters at headquarters, with one or two serving in the regional

[13]. For instance, the expertise and institutional framework of FAO were used, together with those of UNCTAD, to prepare the International Tropical Timber Agreement and the establishment of the International Tropical Timber Organization.
[14]. The World Resources Institute is an American NGO based in Washington that is active in environmental affairs.
[15]. Many of the commonsense concepts of TFAP were resuscitated in the late 1990s within the framework of the lengthy and protracted forestry followup to the Rio Summit, under the paradigm of national forest programs, applicable to all countries, whether tropical or not.
[16]. Up to a point of opposing, at a certain time, any effort to harmonize the various ecoregional processes of criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management.
[17]. One such concept is “forest community.”

offices.[18] Some of these Americans had served as Peace Corps officers in the 1960s or had worked previously in US and FAO field programs.[19] However, the most significant change in staff composition was elsewhere: there was a steady increase in professionals from developing countries, at both headquarters and regional offices, and in the ever-increasing (until the early 1990s) number of field projects executed by FAO in conservation and forestry.[20]

7. Conclusion

This review of more than 50 years of European and American influence in forestry at FAO reveals an interesting difference. Whereas most western European governments have been steadily present and interacting with the FAO system, mostly through the trust funds and junior experts schemes, American influence has essentially been felt through individuals, universities, and research groups. FAO has benefited all along from the dedication and loyalty of the relatively few US Forest Service staff and other foresters who have served it, and from the very beginning when illustrious American foresters and conservationists were instrumental in finding a home for international forestry in FAO. This is in sharp contrast with the relatively discreet involvement, regarding forestry, of the United States since the 1950s in the governing structure and Secretariat of FAO, limiting its influence on the design and implementation of the organization's forest policies and programs. One probable reason is that the political and economic stakes were not considered high enough by the Department of State and the Department of Commerce to give priority to forestry issues, except when it was to oppose a legally binding instrument on forests. In fact, American influence has been much more indirect, through the use by the FAO Secretariat of the considerable and varied forestry expertise in the United States.

The review of international forestry during the last century raises some more general questions, including these two:

- Should forestry remain a mandate of FAO, or rather, should it become that of another UN agency (or program)? A similar question can be posed at the national level in most countries: should forestry be the responsibility of the ministry in charge of agriculture, or elsewhere? All possible organizational charts within the United Nations, as well as at the national level, have their comparative merits and shortcomings for forestry. It is true that foresters often wonder whether the most adequate place for forestry is in a structure dominated by agricultural interests. However, linking forestry to agriculture has at least two significant advantages: first, the interface between the two main and competing uses of the land is handled under the same roof, and thus deforestation issues can be better tackled; second, the multifaceted contribution of forestry to food security can be more easily highlighted and valorized.
- Among the alternative institutional options, one is to have, at the international level and within or outside the UN system, a separate entity dealing with forestry, the same way there exists a separate ministry of forestry in some countries, or an autonomous forestry entity disaffiliated to a single ministry. This option was promoted by some at

[18]. Few, however, stay for longer than five years, for various reasons, including limitations on the leave of absence given to Forest Service employees, the difficulty spouses encounter in finding jobs in Rome, and preference for the American social environment and way of life.
[19]. One of them, David Harcharik, was head of the Forestry Department from 1995 to 2000.
[20]. From 1974 to 1994, the Forestry Department was headed by nationals from Latin America and the Caribbean.

the time of the Rio Summit but did not go a long way, probably because it was found at the least not feasible, if not inappropriate.

A final remark, inspired by this review: browsing through the documentation from the beginning of the 20th century, one cannot help feeling a sense of repetition, of a certain stuttering in the problems found, in the diagnoses made, and in the solutions proposed. Though many will argue that new words and concepts are needed to translate new issues and that new approaches must be designed, we realize that often we deal with the same, basic, lasting problems requiring fundamentally the same sort of solutions.

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Note on the Author

Jean-Paul Lanly graduated from *École Polytechnique* (an advanced institute in mathematics, physics, and chemistry in Paris) and the Nancy School of Forestry, and has a PhD from the University of Toulouse. At the *Centre Technique Forestier Tropical*, from 1963 to 1971, he designed and supervised large-scale forest surveys and management research activities in tropical Africa and Latin America. He served later on at the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in several capacities before becoming director of its Forest Resources Division in 1984, with responsibilities in global forestry activities such as the Forest Resources Assessment programme, the Tropical Forestry Action Plan, and the forestry component of the 1992 Rio “Earth Summit”. Back in France in 1996, he led the Nature Conservation, Forests and Wood Section of the Council of Rural Development, Waters and Forests (*Conseil Général du GREF*) of the Ministry of Agriculture. Since his retirement from the civil service in 2003, he remains active in forestry and related fields, and is treasurer of the French Academy of Agriculture.

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