DOI: 10.1515/frp-2016-0037
Available online: www.lesne-prace-badawcze.pl

Leśne Prace Badawcze / *Forest Research Papers*
Grudzień / December 2016, Vol. 77 (4): 358–370

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

e-ISSN 2082-8926

Why do foresters oppose the enlargement of the Białowieża National Park? The motivation of the State Forests Holding employees as perceived by social actors engaged in the conflict over the Białowieża Forest

Krzysztof Niedziałkowski

The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology of the Polish Academy of Sciences*, ul. Nowy Świat 72, 00–330 Warszawa, Poland;
The Mammal Research Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences, ul. Waszkiewicza 1, 17–230 Białowieża, Poland

*Tel. +48 22 8267181, fax +48 22 8267823, e-mail: kniedzialkowski@ifispan.waw.pl

Abstract. This study outlines the main motives of foresters opposing the enlargement of the Białowieża National Park to include areas managed by the State Forests Holding. The motives were identified using discourse analysis tools based on the semi-structured interviews with 36 people representing various groups of actors engaged in the discussion on the management of the Białowieża Forest. The main motives I found are connected to: (1) a vision of how nature should be and the foresters' mission; (2) fear of losing employment or getting a worse job; (3) the high esteem of the forester profession in local communities and an inferior vocational status of the national park employees; (4) defending the professional prestige of foresters and the State Forests Holding; (5) competition with national parks over natural areas; (6) forest science; (7) the wish to continue hunting in the Białowieża Forest; (8) bottom-up pressure on the State Forests Holding employees. The major conflict potential in the discourse around the Białowieża Forest is connected with the perception of its unique natural values and methods of protection. As a result, two opposing coalitions have formed: one supporting forestry interests and one encouraging conservation. The discourse of the forestry-supporting coalition is strengthened by an epistemic community of forest scientists. Some arguments presented by the foresters pushing for a continuation of forest management in Białowieża also indicate the involvement of path dependency, which, in combination with large differences between the coalitions, does not allow for optimism regarding the resolution of the conflict.

Keywords: environmental conflict, foresters, motivation, discourse coalitions, nature conservation, biodiversity, protected areas

1. Introduction

The dispute over the management of Białowieża Forest (BF) is one of the longest lasting environmental conflicts in Poland. It began in the years just after Poland regained its independence, so soon it will be 100 years from the beginning of the discussion on whether and to what extent the forest should be exploited (Szafer 1957). Since the start of this discussion, foresters – employees of the State Forests Holding (SF), who administered the greater part of the forest – have participated in that discussion. They have also undertaken efforts to keep the forest as a resource of the SF and halt attempts to extend the boundaries of the Białowieża National Park (BNP) undertaken by the scientific community and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Blicharska and Angelstam 2010, Niedziałkowski et al. 2012).

Previous social research on the BF approached the role of SF and their employees in various ways. Sometimes it was ignored, with researchers focusing on local communities as the main group protesting against increasing the protection of the forest (Adamczyk 1994, Sadowski 2001). Sometimes foresters were considered part of a unified coalition with the local community (Franklin 2002). In some studies, their role in the discussion about expanding the boundaries of the BNP had a greater presence (Blavascunas 2014, Blicharska and Angelstam 2010, Blicharska and Van Herzele 2015, Gliński 2001, Niedziałkowski et al. 2012).

Gliński (2001) identifies the foresters as one of the main groups involved in the conflict and outlines their motives and means of influence. He stresses that the foresters want to maintain current forest management practices through what is known as 'active protection', which allows timber harvesting.

Submitted: 9.08.2016, reviewed: 28.08.2016, accepted after revision: 27.09.2016

He indicates that there is a sense of the need to defend the professional pride of foresters, who feel that their achievements in protecting the forest are ignored by the so-called 'ecologists' representing environmental NGOs. They want a decisive voice regarding the management of the forest and believe that Western Europe, which was unable to protect its own forests, cannot criticise their management practices. The opposition of the foresters to expand the BNP is also associated with material issues – the potential loss of a job or having to work in a job with worse conditions and less pay.

According to Gliński (2001), foresters could, through the local population, influence the process of the expansion of the BNP. The population views SF employees positively, perceiving them as protecting the forest whilst providing economic benefits. However, according to proponents of BNP expansion, foresters 'are driving a wedge between the local community and scientists' (Gliński 2001, p. 95), fearing a loss of influence. They have a particularly large influence on local authorities, which, according to some respondents, have lost the ability to distinguish between the interests of local residents and the SF. At the same time, foresters are supposedly leading a disinformation campaign amongst local communities for which they are the main source of information about the enlargement. That way they can informally prevent the Park's expansion, which they couldn't officially oppose being subordinated to the Ministry promoting enlargement of the protected area. The ability to influence local communities is linked to the good relations between residents and foresters, the trust bestowed on them as a result of their assimilation as well as economic factors – the provision of well-paying jobs and the supply of raw materials for local industries.

In her ethnographic studies of the conflict of the BF, Blavascunas (2014) focused on the foresters and their relations with the local communities. She suggests that the foresters have gained respectability amongst local residents, acting as defenders of these communities, defending their access to the forest and the ability to build in the open land protected since 2004 by the European Natura 2000 network. The foresters, according to Blavascunas, have adopted the local language and focused their narrative at the local level, blaming national and international interests for the attack on local values, traditions and democracy. The fact that they actually represent a strong public organisation, which in the past contributed to strengthening of the power of the state and Polish representation in areas ethnically dominated by Belarusians and Ukrainians, is ignored. Foresters referred to local values in response to conservation supporters invoking national, pan-European and global arguments against the exploitation of the forest. At the same time, foresters also created an idealised vision of the past, in which the productive and peaceful work in the forest, organised by foresters, united various local social groups, contributing to the region's economic prosperity. As a result, local residents believe that foresters, as the undisputed experts, should decide on the management of the forest, without having national and international constraints acting against local interests. Residents of the BF region accept the vision of the forest and the role of the forester presented by SF employees. According to Blavascunas, the concept of 'local' has come to mean anyone who is not an 'environmentalist' or a scientist. Focusing on the ways foresters have defended their authority over the forest, Blavascunas only outlines their motivation in undertaking such actions, indicating a certain vision of what the forest is and how it should be managed.

The differences in perceiving the essence of the BF, as well as who should manage it, have received in-depth treatment by Blicharska and Van Herzele (2015). In their opinion, foresters represent the 'managerial discourse' in relation to the BF, according to which they are the caretakers of the forest with an obligation to maintain its sustainability and value in accordance with the legal requirements imposed on them by legislation. In an anthropocentric discourse going back to the 19th century, forests are areas managed by foresters in accordance with the teachings of forest science, ensuring their sustainable, long-term use by humans, including the continuous extraction of timber. The main aims of such management are maintaining the appropriate sanitary conditions of the forest, ensuring that the tree stand composition complies with the existing habitat, and appropriately varying the species diversity of the forest. The management principles are strictly institutionalised – they define the methods of extracting timber, the number of trees on a hectare, the identification of pests and manner of combatting them, methods of fire prevention, and so on. At the same time, according to Blicharska and Van Herzele (2015), foresters also fit into the discourse that emphasises the need to ensure, through forest management, appropriate economic conditions for the local communities. Forest management in this discourse is a traditional activity implemented by local communities (including foresters), which provides them with work and prosperity. The authors emphasise that the narration of the foresters greatly influenced the local community because of their close contacts, high social position, presence in local authorities and the economic role of forestry at the local level.

Niedziałkowski, Paavola and Jędrzejewska (2012) draw attention to the continued presence of foresters in discussions about the BF from the early 20th century, as the party in favour of timber harvesting and counteracting naturalists' efforts to stop the exploitation of timber in certain parts of the forest. The authors suggest that foresters perceived the actions of naturalists as an attempt to limit their administrative authority over the forest and to introduce wrong forest management methods by not intervening in the tree stands. SF employees actively opposed initiatives to increase forest protection at both the local and the central level. According to the authors, close cooperation with local communities, which were accustomed to the important role played by forestry in the local economy, contributed to the effectiveness of these actions. Foresters were

also the local social elite, sat in the representative bodies of municipalities and had a significant influence on the position of the residents relating to the forest. The gradually growing role of local governments after 1989 favoured the opponents of expanding the BNP, which was reflected in the legislative change in 2000 providing local authorities with a right to veto enlarging national parks or establishing new ones. According to Niedziałkowski et al. (2012), another reason for the low effectiveness of naturalists was the restricted organisational and political ability of the Ministry of the Environment to expand the BNP. Subsequent attempts by ministers failed, amongst other things, because of the informal but effective resistance of foresters who wanted to maintain their authority over the forest.

The papers mentioned earlier identify foresters as key social actors with a significant impact on the dynamics of the dispute about the BF. These actors undertake activities and present narratives strengthening the role of the SF in the forest. However, the authors of papers analysing the BF debate usually provide only a fairly general description of the foresters' motives that induce them to engage in the conflict. They mainly draw attention to the differences between foresters and naturalists in their vision of the forest and the role of humans in its management as well as the desire of the foresters to maintain well-paid jobs. It is also suggested that for strategic purposes, foresters emphasise the local economic benefits of forest management in order to achieve their basic motives and to defend themselves against the arguments of 'ecologists'. The aim of this study is to deepen the reflection on the motives of SF employees in defending their way of managing the BF and to indicate the differences in the way it is perceived by foresters and other social actors involved in the discussion about the forest.

Motivation is an element of the discourse of social actors involved in conflicts over resources (Few 2002). Hajer and Versteeg (2005, p. 275) define discourse as 'an ensemble of ideas, concepts and categories through which meaning is given to social and physical phenomena, and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices'. Research on discourse identifies how influential social actors try to define the problem and impose their interpretation on others and how this interpretation translates into political decisions (Dryzek 2013). The paper by Rancew-Sikora (2002) is an example of a discourse analysis of the conflicts in Polish nature conservation. It outlined the main groups of social actors involved in the conflict (including foresters, scientists and 'ecologists') and their discursive strategies. When it comes to conflicts over the control of space, such as the conflict about the BF, Sharp et al. (2000) note that different groups of social actors inscribe different meanings, values and ways of use to the specific physical space, manifested in the discourse and becoming the source of conflict. Understanding the motives of foresters to engage in the discussion on the BF will allow a fuller understanding of the substance of the dispute about the forest and the reasons for its persistence; it may also contribute to the development of policies to mitigate the conflict.

2. Materials and methods

In 2010–2011, the author conducted individual in-depth interviews with 36 people representing different groups of social actors involved in the discussion on the BF (Table 1). An institutional key was used in their selection (managers and employees of organisational units of the SF, national park, central and local government at various levels, research institutions). In addition, interviews were conducted with people who, according to existing data, actively participated in the conflict. The snowball method was also used, asking respondents to identify other persons who could provide new information about the dispute. In choosing respondents, the author tried to maintain a balance in terms of representation of the parties to the conflict. In-depth interviews lasted 1–2.5 h. An interview script was used with a list of basic questions and respondents also had the freedom to raise issues that they considered important. The motives of foresters were one of the issues discussed.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed and then approved by the respondents, unless they opted out of this possibility. The prepared texts were anonymised, removing elements that could have identified the respondents, and coded in the NVivo programme in order to distinguish the types of motives foresters have in opposing the expansion of the BNP as presented by foresters and non-foresters. This dual perspective contributed to a deeper understanding of the motives of foresters and the presentation of their 'thickest' possible description (Adger et al. 2003). In addition, it allowed to identify key areas of the conflict at the level of discourse, including the identification of those motives of foresters that were particularly critically viewed as well as those that were not judged as controversial or not recognised at all by the non-forester group. In order to verify the information gathered from the interviews, existing data (reports, press releases) were used. In addition, when it came to the motives suggested by non-foresters, the description included only those motives that were indicated by at least two respondents.

3. Results

The following are the main types of motives of foresters that induce them to take a negative stand on enlarging the BNP to the entire area of the BF.

3.1. Motive relating to the vision of nature and the work of a forester

The foresters' vision of the essence of the forest, its qualities and the proper ways of managing it was one of the most frequently mentioned motives for their resistance to include the entire Polish part of BF in the national park. According to this vision, the forest should be shaped by foresters to achieve its preferred

Table 1. Number of in-depth interviews according to the groups of social actors

Groups of social actors	Number of interviewees
Foresters	6*
Local people	6
Scienists	6
NGOs	4
Local authorities	3
Politicians	3
Białowieża National Park staff	2
Government officials	2
Employees of companies offering forestry services	1
Entrepreneurs	1
Guides	1
Journalists	1
Total	36

*One interview was carried out with two employees of the State Forest Holding

aesthetic and utilitarian features. An especially important aesthetic category is the concept of the 'beauty of a forest', meaning a forest made up of diverse species, appropriate to the habitat, with many intensely growing, stately trees of desired species, such as oak, ash, pine and spruce. Foresters believe that to achieve such a forest in as short a time as possible, active care of the stands is required, as well as protection against fires, wild animals, pests and the shade of grasses, shrubs and against other, less valuable species of trees, such as birch, aspen and hornbeam. According to forestry-related interviewees, a large part of the forest had already lost its natural character and is dominated by commercial forests that must be maintained in order to obtain valuable timber: 'We planted most of this forest and it has to be cared for so that it looks good and maintains its value (...). We strive to have trees of the best quality' [forester 19/2010]; 'All the thinnings are made in order to harvest the best assortments' [forester 21/2010]. In addition, to restore the natural qualities of the forest, foresters are fixing the errors committed by others in managing the forest, 'after the tragedies that affected the forest (...) in the last century, the famous Centura, the first world war, the second world war, to rebuild, re-naturalize these stands' [forester 15/2010]. Thanks to the efforts of foresters, 'with each year the Białowieża Forest is more beautiful (...), it is in good condition. With each year, the area grows because the State Forests are planting new areas and the tree stands are older from year to year. The volume increases' [forester 21/2010]. These activities are possible because of the 'multifunctional management provided by the State Forests. This is how it has been since the 1990s. So everything: protection and conservation of valuable forest fragments. Above all, the sustainability of the forest, while maintaining valuable fragments, biodiversity, so that everything was there ...' [ZUL, 20/2010].

A common theme of foresters is that their actions stem from legal provisions they are obliged to follow. If they did not, as the 'ecologists' want, they would have had to suffer the financial and organisational consequences: 'We are currently following the law. We have the Forestry Act, we have to implement forest management plans, and [if] someone says that we cut down trees, harvest the forest, well, you can comment on this by saying that we are implementing the plan' [forester 16/2010]; 'Of course, I follow our forestry regulations, because I depend on them. This is what I am paid for' [forester 15/2010]. The legal aspects of forest management were also raised by representatives of other groups of actors: 'You have to remember that foresters are required to follow instructions, to which they are held accountable, e.g. by inspectors' [BNP 18/2010]; 'You cannot breach the instructions. If they are not followed, then you need to have arguments. And scientists (...) should have those arguments, not the foresters. So, let's not blame the forester that logs' [scientist 31/2010].

According to people connected with SF, halting management would have negative consequences for the quality of the forest's natural features: 'If the forest is closed, and all you have is the National Park, there will be no forest (...) the stands here will suffer terribly' [ZUL 20/2010]; 'If, for example, we will not fight the bark beetle, if we left it all to its own devices, it would all be wasted. The wood would die, it would become some (…) park... This forest would look completely different' [forester 19/2010]. This critical reference to the BNP relates to the negative assessment of the condition of the forest in the BNP: 'This is terrible. I don't know why people are so fascinated. The tree stands are falling and hornbeam is coming in' [forester 19/2010]; 'And in the park (...), in the strict reserve, will there ever be oak stands in the future? There won't be' [forester 21/2010]; 'So much wood is being wasted and those old

trees are not letting the young ones grow' [forester 24/2010]. Foresters are able to convince other actors of their perspective, 'leaving the forest to itself will result in its dying, because man interfered in nature once, and now it turns out that if left alone, it would degrade much faster than if this interference had never occurred. Well, because different civilizational diseases also affect the forest, regardless of its condition. And so the foresters say, 'Thanks to the fact that we are doing something there, we are able to either maintain the tree stand for a longer period or even able to reconstruct it' [politician 33/2010].

Foresters negatively assess the potential impact of expanding the BNP on life in the local communities, 'a little bit of harvesting must occur here, if only to meet the needs of the local population (...). The local population is against this [enlargement] due to the fact that it [the forest] is their legacy. And closing it to them, because I do not believe that the park would be available, is a kind of ... (...). Because forest regulations, when it comes to access to the forest, to certain types of forest use, are more liberal, even more realistic than those that will be put into place when the park is established, where (…) the restrictive provisions on the protection of nature [will be overriding] in relation to the needs of the people.' [forester 15/2010]; 'Thanks to this [forestry], people will have [the resources] for their livelihood, but then [after the enlargement of the BNP], a reliable source will be lost. They will not have fuelwood. (...) All these villages heat their homes with wood. (...) And so, where will they get it? They'll burn straw?' [forester 19/2010]; '[People] lived from harvesting of this wood here, (...) they collected branches, (...) they make some handcraft, bird feeders, other things (...). Well, but where will they take the wood from needed for this?' [ZUL 20/2010]. These types of narratives convince other actors and are repeated by them: 'Foresters say, [that] when park employees want to make an exhibition of mushrooms, or (...) undergrowth, (...) they come to us [the State Forests area] to collect the mushrooms, because they can't do it in the BNP (...). So how will all of this be with the national park, where will they gather those mushrooms, show young people berries, mushrooms and other things?' [Politician 33/2010]. Other respondents suggested, in turn, the political union of forestry and the local economy relating to the harvesting of wood: 'this lobby, sawmills, which were established there after 1990, that economic element associated with processing timber, is terribly strong and it greatly influences local governments. [There are] a very strong ties: foresters – local authorities' [politician 12/2011].

Representatives of other groups recognise the existence of a different vision of the BF presented by the foresters: 'Foresters maintain that they protect the Białowieża Forest very well on their own' [BNP 26/2010]. A representative of an NGO admits: 'They also do not believe that forestry management harms the forest, [they believe] that nevertheless it is possible to reconcile [protection and harvesting] (…). They simply believe this and are convinced that this is indeed so. If a forester does not manage the forest, it will simply [die]' [28/2010]. The perspective of foresters is well understood by some interviewees: 'They are probably convinced, and to a certain extent they are right, that they do valuable things. They are harmed by [negative] opinions. So, they are fighting for their own, fighting for being right' [politician 32/2011].

At the same time, respondents with a different perspective on the forest are critical of the vision, which they deem is presented by foresters: 'If you talk with a forester, they have preserved the mentality that I had in the 1970s, where when I entered a forest, I would count cubic meters of wood. And this is how they continuously perceive it. When they look at a beautiful oak, they say: if we don't cut it, we'll lose it. (...) This resistance is deep inside them: I am a forester and my job is to harvest wood and sell the wood. And my protective role lies in the fact that if I harvest, I have to plant (...). The surface area of the Białowieża Forest is not reduced' [resident of Białowieża 3/2010]. A government official puts it this way: 'They all have this ingrained in their heads that, first, there was a forester, and then the forest, that you cannot do without an ax, that the forester protects the forest. In fact, forest protection, as understood by the average forester, relates to protecting it against thieves, fire, pests, right, etc. And generally, a forest is a tree stand, right? That's how they see it' [11/2011]. In this context, advocates of the expansion of the BNP accuse foresters of a lack of understanding of the conservation perspective and the gap between foresters and 'ecologists' in this respect: 'Many local foresters have no understanding of what it is, why harvesting should be limited. Some foresters and deputy foresters do not understand the arguments relating to nature and conservation at all. They state that these arguments are baloney, that this is some sort of madness. They are firmly convinced that taking care of some protected insects, acting on their behalf, it is just a waste of time, money, etc.' [scientist 7/2010].

Different visions of the forest are the seeds of the conflict. Foresters believe that they do work which is of value to nature, the economy and society and in accordance with the law. Therefore, criticism from the 'ecologists' associated with a different understanding of nature protection and the form of this criticism, as well as the one-sided, according to foresters, coverage of the dispute by the media induces a sense of injustice amongst them: 'The media only listen to the NGOs, not us. They twist everything, they write lies... [A name of the journalist], after all, this [a name of the journalist], well, after all... They are liars. They are lying all the time. Or write half-truths. And we cannot defend ourselves. To some extent, we are powerless. This results in a reaction... and that reaction exists...' [forester 16/2010]; '(...) Everyone from those NGOs wants to (...) show that we are doing something wrong here, right? Well, that is, foresters are doing the wrong things, right? Their principles are bad, they cut down too many trees, destroy wildlife, destroy protected plants, shoot those poor animals (...) it naturally raises the hostility, right? Well, if they told you that you are doing something wrong with no substantiation, you would also react.

Well, no one is trying to prove these claims, but we are attacked with such slogans, that let's say that the foresters cut down trees, and at the same time they are destroying [the forest] irrevocably. Well, this is total nonsense, right? This is also why it raises such internal opposition in anyone who is told that they work badly' [forester 21/2010]. Such a reaction is understood by some interviewees: 'They just have a feeling of injustice in the sense of being treated unfairly. When they are portrayed in the media almost as some sort of villain' [politician 32/2011]; 'In addition, the non-governmental organizations (...) talk very badly about foresters. Every man has his dignity, his sense of honor. You cannot [treat people] this way' [government official 11/2011].

3.2. Motive associated with the fear of losing one's job or worse employment conditions

A very important motivation for foresters to oppose BNP enlargement is the fear of losing their jobs, 'Everyone here will in some way defend his place of work' [forester 16/2010]. In addition, there is also the issue of potentially worse employment conditions, changes in the specific nature of the work and status associated with it. In the proposals presented thus far to expand the BNP, foresters were offered similar positions in the enlarged park. Such a change would involve, however, a number of potential disadvantages and uncertainties reported by both foresters and representatives of other groups involved in the discussion of the BF: 'Everyone is worried about their job ... Because there is (...) uncertainty, right? Well, so I will work in the park, but each of us is thinking, well, I will, but what my position is going to be? Will I have more money or less? What will I be doing? Oh, here I commuted two kilometers, and there I may have [to commute] 10 kilometers. These are the normal concerns of people' [forester 21/2010].

Representatives of other groups of actors similarly interpret the foresters' concerns, 'No one knows what they will be doing and how. (...) If a person doesn't know, then they're a little afraid of it, no? (...) Because now they know where they stand (...) how much they earn, what they have. (...) A forest district has a forester and a deputy forester (...). If it turns out that they will be doing nothing in the park, then I don't know if that deputy forester will be needed.' [resident of Białowieża 13/2010]. In addition, non-forester respondents pointed to the potential difficulties in adjusting to a new job: 'everyone who has become accustomed to a certain type of work would have to requalify a little, or transform their way of thinking, not to mention that their way of working would have to change' [BNP 18/2010]; 'here they're going along a certain track that is easy. And later they'll have to retrain. You can't cut the trees in that forest, you have to protect it. This is a [challenging] process, so they could be subconsciously resisting this' [guide 4/2010].

Foresters also do not want to change their jobs to ones that pay less: 'When [foresters] have jobs promised to them at, say, half the salary, and additionally know that their jobs are being financed by the central government money, which at any moment could be re-located, they are afraid of this, and I'm not surprised' [forester 15/2010]. Non-foresters also pointed to the lower salaries of workers in national parks and additional benefits that foresters have compared to park employees: 'We can't forget significant additional bonuses foresters have. In the national park, you get uniforms as uniforms. A forester gets some kind of bonuses, and no one is interested in what he bought with that bonuses (...). A second issue is the commute. They have very high monthly mileage allowances that are paid in cash. [Another thing is] in-kind allowances, or wood (...) – they get wood to use for fuel (...) hornbeam, which is a very high-energy (...) and is the preferred fuelwood here in the forest' [scientist 9/2010].

3.3. Motive associated with the status of the professional of forester in the local community and the lower prestige of working in the national park

Respondents pointed out the differences in the type of work performed in the SF and the national park, and the professional prestige of the people working for these institutions. As one scientist stated [6/2010]: 'a real forester should work in the SF, and working in the national park is really of a lower category'. Foresters confirm this: 'watching what the national park is doing in relation to what the SF does, well ... Monitoring and observing is not a job. Those people [who work in the forest districts] are taught specific jobs, responsibilities (...). I think it would be much easier for a forester to switch from the park to working in the State Forests Holding, than vice versa' [15/2010]; 'I know more or less what the work is like in the national parks. These are not my words, but I repeat – it is doing nothing, ok? You can walk through the forest, smell the flowers (...). There are comments in different communities that their pay is already too high for such work' [16/2010]; 'Generally I don't know what the park staff does, what their responsibilities are. As people say, it's sitting on your hands' [19/2010].

The differences perceived in the work of a forester and a park employee are deeper than just the nature of the performed activities. According to one respondent, 'The balance between the national parks and the SF is completely upset (...) politicians have been doing everything possible to strengthen the SF and (...) weaken the national parks. So at some point, the prestige of working in the parks fell. When I started working, the director of the park, it was (...) more or less equal to the rank of the regional governor, right? And now it is a little worse than that of a head of a forest district. (...) And this also is a factor in the (...) opposition of local foresters' [journalist 27/2010].

In the context of the differences between the BNP and SF, the problem of national parks being financed by the state budget was also raised: '[Parks] are part of the state budget. In my opinion, this places them in a really bad situation. (...) In the Public Budget Act

a certain amount of money is determined. There is nothing more, and if it's enough, well good, but if it's not enough, then you're on your own. Many different investments are financed with grants from the National Environmental Fund or other supplemental funds, which makes any long-term planning difficult, even with investments. If they give [us the funds], then we'll do something. If they don't, then we won't do anything.' [forester 16/2010]. A BNP employee also noted this difference: 'The forests [SF] have always had more money, because they [function] differently. This is not a [central] budgetary [institution]. There was a time when they had a lot of money, so much, that they didn't quite know what to do with it (...)' [BNP 18/2010].

According to some respondents, work in SF provided prestige, which also translated into influence in the local communities: '[It is] a tradition. Once, the Regional Directorate of State Forests Holding was located here, in Białowieża. In the interwar period, foresters here led the way (...), they organized cultural life. And then throughout the postwar period, foresters provided jobs, sold wood. They were the masters to whom the peasants had to go, bow and even bribe to sell them the wood. Their position was strong, they had a certain prestige, which still survives. Many local residents perceive these foresters as someone very important – men who are in possession and can provide. They also may not provide. It is a respected group of people. Foresters feel that they have a certain prestige and now the prospect that they would be on a list of park employees, even at the same or similar salary, but with a loss of prestige, they treat this as a degradation. (...) The prestige allowed them to settle various issues. The forester (...) had a fleet of cars, and hence [was able to] distribute goods. (...) Now, it seems, that fees are imposed, but these are still at a very low rate, so (...) institutions become dependent on them. In turn, the foresters feel that they have power, influence. And later they use this, for example in the Municipal Council, etc.' [scientist 7/2010].

This historically grounded, strong position of SF workers amongst the local population is confirmed by a resident of Białowieża: 'If you go back historically, the SF employee, forester, was a friend of the residents, because forester gave work. (...) The forester for the residents of Białowieża, was a sort of tsar, God, and chief. Because the forest gave work; the forester oversaw how the work was done; you drank vodka with the forester' [3/2010]. As one of the scientists suggested, the sale of wood is still an important element of building the prestige of foresters in local communities: 'The purchase of wood looks like this, you go to the forestry district or to the forester (...) and tell them that you want to buy such and such an amount of wood, of such and such a species. And this man looks at you and says that he either has it or not. And you can't tell him that it's stacked right out there. You aren't able to check this. (...) Later, when the forester sells a hornbeam to this person or that one, despite the fact that there was no wood for others, well, such a person is going to vote for the forester, so that he can become a councilor (...)' [9/2010].

3.4. Motive associated with defending the prestige of the professional forester and the State Forests Holding

The motives of prestige, ambition and honour are often indicated by foresters and non-foresters as reasons for opposing the handover of the BF by the SF. Four basic dimensions of these motives are presented in the following.

The prestige associated with managing a unique place

The motive of prestige is first related to the unique nature of the BF: 'Everyone knows that we work in a place that is pretty unique. And this is confirmed by the many trips here from abroad, foresters, who come not only from Poland but from Germany, Austria, the Netherlands. There are even tours from the United States, Canada' [forester 21/2010]. This aspect is also recognised by other actors: 'SF employees bring their foreign guests to boast about the BF. In a sense, they are proud of it. (...) Ambition must also be taken into account. As a regional director in Bialystok says – Oh, we have the Białowieża Forest – (...) you simply have to reckon with this' [BNP 18/2010].

The prestige associated with the continuity of foresters' work in the BF

Second, there is the ambition to maintain the continuity of the institutional authority of the SF over the forest and the results of the work of generations of foresters: 'The SF has been the administrator [of the BF] for eighty-five years' [forester 16/2010]; 'First of all, prestige [is a reason for subsidizing the deficit forestry districts of the BF]. (...) that the SF in Poland can afford to maintain the cradle of forestry (...). I think this is a kind of tradition, just to keep the place, at least in part, in the hands of the [SF]. (...) However, foresters have preserved this forest through their activities to this day and the forest has been sort of girded to the foresters from many, many generations' [forester 15/2010]; '[If the BNP is enlarged] we will have wasted the years of work of the foresters in Białowieża Forest' [forester 19/2010]; 'It is a matter of pride. Since they are proud of BF, they cannot let the work of generations be destroyed. You pay for pride' [guide 4/2010].

The theme of the ability to maintain deficit forest districts in the BF by SF for prestigious reasons appeared repeatedly in the statements of different groups of actors: '[It] is a simply a matter of human shame to give up management of the forest after so many years. To suddenly say: No, we don't want it anymore, because we don't have the money. (...) In this limited scope, the forest can be subsidized, even to maintain that prestige [of the SF, as a self-financing institution], that can afford to keep [the forest districts of the BF]' [forester 15/2010]. A scientist similarly perceives this issue: 'An important factor [of the resistance to expanding the BNP] is

that SF is very keen on also being the manager of BF, and therefore even bear some costs, but because of the prestige, to continue [conducting] activities in the forest' [6/2010].

Foresters emphasise that profit is not the primary goal of their company: 'SF was a company and worked for profit. Because the SF District Board [under the previous system] (...) functioned as a company. But in 1990, its status completely changed and SF became (...) an administrator of the National Treasury and stopped working for profit' [forester 16/2010]; 'We don't look at profits – and so are subsidized as the Białowieża Forest' [forester 15/2010]. Some SF employees personally distance themselves from forestry oriented towards a financial bottom line: 'I'm not some, say, radical forester, who wants to go with an axe and a saw to the forest and cut wood only to sell it and profit from it. Absolutely' [forester 15/2010]. Despite these declarations, foresters also mention the need to earn income and account for it: 'We have to carry out this plan [culling], because we will be audited and have to settle our accounts: Why didn't you earn any income? Because this is income' [15/2010].

Some non-forester respondents indicate motives that, despite the subsidies, could induce local SF workers to more intensive harvesting in the forest districts. First, there is a discrepancy between the regulations of the SF and the exceptional situation of the BF: 'instructions are for the company, whose goal is profit (...). So it is hardly surprising that the deadwood wasn't left. Because the inspector will come and will want an explanation of why the deadwood wasn't removed' [BNP 18/2010]. The second is the need for a sense of financial independence of the foresters: 'The general spirit is that [SF] is a self-funded company. And the forester, who has extensive protected areas (...) is almost ashamed that he is being supported by the earnings of other regions' [government official 11/2011]; 'From what other forest districts outside the BF earn [work], you have to take their money which they, too, would like to use for their own needs' [scientist 31/2010]; 'Local foresters adhere to strict rules of silviculture and to the management plan (...) and defend themselves against any changes. (...) The more they harvest, the smaller the deficit of each forest district. (...) Each forest district wants to earn the highest profit, have the lowest financial loss' [scientist 7/2010]; 'They are uncomfortable when they aren't earning [for themselves], but are getting subsidies all the time (...)' [NGO 34/2010].

Defending the pride of professional foresters

The third dimension of the prestige motive in opposing the expansion of the BNP is a sense that the pride of the professional forester needs to be defended, especially in the face of criticism from non-governmental circles: 'First, and perhaps foremost, is the matter of honor. (...) Such a dilettante [an NGO representative] that has completed some studies on social rehabilitation can't dictate the conditions about which he doesn't have a clue, right? But (...) this forest is managed by about 150 people. Half of them probably have a higher education degree. To discredit their work, [based on] school, university in such a way? This breeds resistance. (...) This is a matter of professional dignity' [forester 16/2010]. This problem does not pertain only to the pride of local SF employees, but of the entire institution: 'We have emotional considerations here. The [SF] is organizationally defending the BF as an object that in their view is well managed, which means that it is well protected, as the foresters say. [This is] such a somewhat prestigious [for the State Forests] confrontation to keep this piece of wilderness in their hands. And they won't give this up without a fight' [BNP 26/2010].

Also, according to a former SF employee, ambition relating to defending a particular vision of the forest and its protection motivates foresters to oppose enlargement at different levels of the forest administration: 'And when it comes to the upper echelons [of the SF], it's a matter of ambition. Foresters are convinced they are the best environmentalists and know best how to protect the forest. Because otherwise without foresters, the forest will wither' (forester 24/2010]. This same respondent quotes, amongst others, the statement of the former deputy director of the SF: 'I would not want to wait for that moment, because it would be a day of defeat for our arguments about the multifunctionality of Polish forestry. The day when it is announced to the world that the Białowieża Forest is no longer being destroyed by Polish foresters. This is an issue clearly related to ambition, and well, this is the essence of how many foresters think'. The former government official suggests a broader context of the ambition game between foresters and naturalists: 'This is a matter of prestige. This is the way it developed over the years: us and them – foresters and naturalists' [11/2011]. The respondent provides an example of the efforts made in the past by an influential forest scientist, 'He would do anything to get foresters involved in nature conservation. And he forced foresters to conduct conservation activities. But woe to the person who would try to do this from outside the community of foresters! This is, God forbid, the enemy. For some kind of biologist (...) to putter around in the State Forests. No! It's the forester's responsibility to protect nature. (...) Only God forbid some formal structure (...) outside the SF' [11/2011].

The necessity of admitting a 'defeat based on arguments' by the foresters and the related loss of professional pride also appears in the statements of other respondents as an important theme in the defence of the authority of SF over the BF: 'The problem is that foresters would have to admit (...) that if the national park was enlarged, their management of BF was wrong. And nobody likes that. Nobody likes to admit that they were mistaken, to defeat, so they will think up all sorts of ways (...) to prove that they are acting the right way. This may also be one of those reasons why the process of enlarging the national park is so difficult. Because one side is being forced to say *mea culpa*' [guide 4/2010]. The dilemma of the foresters is also noted by an entrepreneur from Białowieża: 'The moment they [hand over BF], they will have to admit

that (...) the forest can cope without foresters. That means that for so many years, [foresters] lied, right? I mean, that's how it would be perceived. (...) And now it turns out that BF still exists, and [foresters] are fine with this. That means that for so many years (...) [foresters] deceived us' [10/2010].

3.5. Motive associated with competing for the area with national parks

The next type of motive resulting in foresters' negative perception of efforts to enlarge the BNP relates to the vision of the key role played by the BF for the SF: 'One former SF director said that if the SF gives up BF, it will be the beginning of their end. And I think this is a sort of slogan, which we keep hearing' [guide 4/2010]. One aspect of this fear, partly touching the question of prestige, is the competition for a valuable natural woodland between the SF and the social actors working to establish and expand national parks: 'SF has never been enthusiastic about expanding national parks, enlarging Białowieża [BNP]. Well, because for them it would mean a depletion (...) of assets. Well, because it would come out of [their resources] and someone else [would manage it]' [politician 12/2011]. A government official also notes the strong aversion of SF to hand over land to parks [11/2011]: 'Every hectare given up by SF within the boundaries of national parks, well, they feel as if a piece of their heart has been ripped out'.

In this context, a former employee of SF relates his conversation with the former director of the Regional Directorate of State Forests National Forest Holding in Białystok, '[I asked] "So why did you resist [enlarging the BNP] so much? Why have you become so insistent [against a larger BNP]?" [and he replied] "Because at that time, it was such a parkomania. Because here [name of a well-known nature protection activist] wanted to establish a national park in the Knyszyn Forest, in the Pisz Forest, somewhere in the Borecka Forest, so I thought, if we give them a free rein at the start, then all we'll have around the Białystok Voivodeship [region] are parks". So, ambition decided more here than all the other arguments' [24/2010].

The fears of foresters associated with the potential expansion of national parks are confirmed by an SF employee: 'One hears, for example, that in addition to a national park for the entire BF, there [should] also be a Mazury National Park, right? But we [still] have the (...) Knyszyn Forest National Park. So we hear about (...) such projects' [21/2010]. Competition for forest land contributed, according to several respondents, to the establishment of the Promotional Forest Complex in the BF – the first facility of its kind in Poland: 'It was supposed to be an alternative to the main demand at that time to have the entire Polish part of the [Białowieża] forest made into a national park' [forester 24/2010]. This view is also held by a person associated with the BNP: '[Foresters] maintain that the Forest Promotion Complex [in the BF] is a perfect solution, a non-statutory form of nature conservation. A number of restrictions have been put in place in the forest, which comply with conservation priorities and ensure non-productive functions, essentially a race with the Nature Conservation Act, calculated to neutralize the ideas for conservation. It's turned out to be a systemic solution that has been working effectively for 20 years' [BNP 26/2010]. What is interesting is that, as indicated by the politician-respondent, this race is happening despite the strong position of foresters in the Ministry of the Environment. 'These are foresters who usually became the directors of national parks'. Competition between SF and the national park was also reflected in the activities of forestry districts: 'The national park [and forest inspectorates] were competing with each other. And those foresters [established] forest education centers, and I think at some point, they were better equipped than the one [at the BNP]' [government official 32/2010].

3.6. Motive associated with forest science

Amongst the motives justifying retaining a part of the BF by the SF are issues relating to science and education: 'SF also want to keep part of the forest to conduct various experimental research projects, different scientific studies. Because the park will not be able to do this. (...) We have three such renowned, longstanding faculties [of forestry], i.e. Warsaw, Kraków and Poznań, which conduct many studies here. And we'd be poorer if we had to close this to forest science. In Białowieża there is the premises of the Forestry Research Institute (...). Well, it also has been conducting research all this time here. Many professors made their careers based on this research, got their nominations [as tenured professors]. There have been many scientific works published. This is a part of the annals of the forest tradition, which future generations will draw from. I think to close this to such research would be to the overall detriment of science' [forester 15/2010]. The argument relating to science is also perceived by other actors: '[Foresters] believe that they will lose a valuable testing ground, where their research can be carried out, experimental research of the forest, that there has been a long history of breeding experiments, and these need to be continued. They believe that if the whole area will be a park, not [part of] SF, all this experimental work will be difficult, if not impossible. (...) The vocational forestry school is also set against the park. Every now and then, I hear that if the park were to be expanded, they would have no reason to exist, because they would have no place to perform their practical field work' [scientist 7/2010].

Some respondents pointed out that the opposition of the foresters against the BNP expansion is substantially supported by scientists specialising in forest science: 'There is a lot of support from forester-scientists against expanding the park. For example, Professor [name] (...), a great authority among foresters. And he just indignantly talked about how these environmentalists are trying to force a 30 thousand cubic meters

cup on harvesting. This is contrary to the laws of nature, the art of forestry, etc., it must be based on the needs of silviculture. (...) Others may not be saying this as loudly as he does, but many of those forester-scientists are in opposition' [scientist 7/2010].

3.7. Motive linked to the desire to maintain hunting in the Białowieża Forest

Hunting was cited several times by non-foresters as an important factor in the negative attitude of foresters towards expanding the BNP, both at the local level and at the level of the entire SF. This factor, according to some respondents, allows foresters to influence decision makers, 'Białowieża, as (...) a separate hunting district at the disposal of SF is an incredibly strong lobbying lever' [scientist 14/2010]; '[Hunting] provides [opportunities] for informal meetings, it allows political decisions to be influenced, meetings with many people up there in the political hierarchy (...). Even if the biggest politicians don't come, friends from the SF come, they hunt together, do various things [together]' [NGO 34/2010]. According to a local entrepreneur, hunting in the forest by prominent people was an important part of building the prestige and influence of foresters: 'They hunt here, various big shots come here. (...) you know them, which means that you have a certain power. Once you establish a national park, this is cut off, right? (...) for anyone who wants to come here to hunt, the BF is something ... (....) The legend of the BF is and will always be the greatest legend' [10/2010].

Suggestions of the importance of hunting for lobbying are strongly rejected by foresters: 'Just about a dozen people regularly come here to hunt. These aren't politicians anymore. Earlier there were [politicians hunting here]. (...) However, today they are (...) ordinary hunters, the regular members of the hunting associations' [15/2010]; '[The lobbying of the SF during hunting with dignitaries] is not true. I can't confirm this. I can't name the highest dignitaries. I don't think there are any. There never was. That was some time ago. (...) As we're speaking frankly, it was [name and function of a politician holding high public office], but he isn't hunting, we just went for a ride (...). He liked to observe the game species, but only to observe. Among the others was [a name of a well-known politician]. I think about two years ago (...), but he just rode on the [sightseeing] train. [A name of a politically influential person] was here. Yes, very high officials show up here. But not for hunting' [16/2010]; 'This is a total bullshit. No officials come here [to hunt]. (...) I've been working here for [more than three decades], there were never any officials. Officials probably all avoid the Białowieża Forest like the plague. The only celebrity, whom you and I surely know, who hunts here is [name of a famous actor]' [21/2010].

At the same time, some foresters declare that they themselves are hunters and that hunting is consistent with their worldview: 'Hunting is the heritage of humanity. If not for hunting, if people hadn't hunted thousands of years ago, we wouldn't have had our civilization. (...) But if it [the game] is also here [in the forest district], why shouldn't we hunt, if it is legal, in accordance with tradition, in accordance with our needs' [15/2010]. Foresters also argue that hunting brings tangible financial benefits to the forest districts and allows jobs to be financed and that they are required by law to organise hunting. Accordingly, the prospect of prohibiting hunting in a BNP that has been expanded to the whole BF could negatively dispose foresters to enlarging the Park.

3.8. Motive associated with the grassroots pressure of SF workers

The issue of lower level SF foresters exerting pressure on higher level forestry staff as an important factor shaping the attitude of the latter in relation to BNP expansion was mentioned twice in the collected material. In this context, a government official [11/2011] mentioned a conversation with highly placed foresters: 'They told me: Look, we are fed up with this forest, you know. We would have let it go a hundred times already, because this whole war just isn't worth it'. According to the official, the foresters were to have suggested that the reason for their position was the fear of a negative reaction from their subordinates. Another respondent said that the issues of environmental protection are better understood at the regional level than locally: 'Others [foresters] from the regional directorate may see this [a need to limit logging], but I think the pressure from these local foresters is too strong to reduce [wood harvesting]' [scientist 7/2010].

4. Discussion

The set of motives underlying the negative attitude of foresters to expand the BNP to the entire BF, confirmed through the in-depth interviews, is multidimensional. First, it includes the motives of local level SF employees (e.g. fear of job loss or deterioration of working conditions, the desire to maintain their high status in the community), those of foresters at the central and regional levels (competition for the forests with national parks, the pressure of lower level foresters) and the motives common for all these groups (the vision of nature and the work of foresters, prestige of the foresters and SF). Second, the set of motives points out the negative consequences of BNP enlargement for many groups of actors – the foresters themselves, local residents, students, scientists involved in forestry, hunters and even the employees of BNP. Third, the presented set of motives relates to material factors associated with economic issues (job loss or the deterioration of employment terms) and intangible factors (issues of prestige, ambition). A group of motives of a strategic and political character can also be distinguished (issues of competition with the parks, hunting). The comprehensive nature of the discourse of foresters regarding their motivation 'to defend' the forest suggests that it has developed over a long period of time and

indicates its partly strategic nature aimed at involving the broadest possible group of social actors to form a discursive coalition (Hajer 1995) that opposes BNP expansion.

The obtained data confirm in part the results of previous studies on the role of the SF in the discussion about the BF. Blavascunas (2014) as well as Blicharska and Van Herzele (2015) highlighted the significance of the foresters' vision of a well-managed, beautiful forest that continually requires appropriate care. In addition, Blicharska and Van Herzele (2015) also identified a motive associated with providing local communities with economic resources, including access to timber and the provision of jobs, which is also confirmed by the results obtained. On the other hand, Gliński (2001) drew attention to the theme of defending the pride of professional foresters, who believe that they do a good job but are unfairly criticised by representatives of NGOs. This theme was also identified in this study, although the suggested range of the motives relating to prestige was much wider. Apart from the need of foresters to defend their perception of proper forest management and the role of the forester, it also includes prestige which the SF enjoys due to their management of a unique place as well as maintaining the continuity of the work of foresters, despite having had to cover the costs of deficit forest districts. The desire to avoid having to admit defeat, should the BNP be expanded, also has a prestigious character.

The results also include motives that have not yet appeared in the literature or appeared only in a rudimentary form. Above all, the theme of deteriorating work conditions and status in the transition from SF to the national park and the changing nature of the work were strongly emphasised. Although Gliński (2001) identified a basic financial argument, it turns out that equally important may be the loss of the high social and professional status enjoyed by foresters in the local communities and the associated ability to influence those communities as well as the loss of non-wage sources of income, financial independence and the transition to being funded by the central budget, being forced to retrain and change one's way of perceiving the forest. Additionally, an important element of the foresters' resistance is the prospect of performing what they see as less valuable, less responsible and less prestigious job in the national park.

The literature on the BF has not yet addressed the motive associated with the desire of SF to halt the expansion of national parks at the expense of the resources controlled by its administration, amongst other ways, by developing new forms of protection, and thus allowing the SF stewardship to be continued. These motives are, however, consistent with the results of Rancew-Sikora's (2002) study concerning the discourse on environmental conflicts. She noted increasing complaints amongst foresters about the 'interest in seizing' naturally valuable forests by having a certain site placed under protective status (i.e. establishing a national park) and turning over its management to another entity. In addition, the author draws attention to the adoption by the SF administration of some of the concepts and environmental demands associated with an increase in the acceptance of knowledge in society about environmental protection and the growing social pressure for sustainable forest management. As Rancew-Sikora (2002) suggests, combining conservation and forestry is sometimes problematic and often unfavourable in the economic calculation, which also appeared in the case of BF in the form of a tension between the need to subsidise forest districts operating at a loss and the desire to preserve these districts' financial independence.

So far, the need to ensure the continuity of research performed by forest scientists in the BF, which, according to foresters, could not be continued after giving up SF management over the forest, was raised to a limited degree. This motive, in part also related to prestige, is connected to a group of researchers, who, according to some respondents, provide foresters with scientific arguments, strengthening foresters' belief that they are properly protecting the forest in line with forest science. This may be an indication of the existence of the so-called epistemic community (Haas 1992), understood as a network of recognised experts with appropriate experience and knowledge in a given field, who can make authoritative statements that constitute the arguments of choosing a particular course of action in the field. Such a community is based on a set of values and beliefs about existing cause–effect relationships as well as on the ways of confirming the legitimacy of the statements being made. It also involves a common perception of the legitimacy of certain actions in response to specific problems that can be solved in this manner for the benefit of society. It can be argued that the foresters and forest scientists form an epistemic community that proposes its way of reacting to the problem of uncertainty as to how to best manage and protect national forest resources, including the BF. They base this on a shared vision of the forest, a role of the forester, knowledge deemed adequate for decision making and the cause–effect relationships essential for the proper, socially beneficial management of the forest. Following this path of reasoning, depriving the 'forest' community of the knowledge obtained from BF could weaken its status and influence on forest policies. Referring to the research of Rancew-Sikora (2002), it can be stated that this community is conducting a discursive struggle with biologists and members of NGOs with a dominant status in deciding on nature conservation, including the protection of forests in Poland.

One of the important motives pointed out by foresters justifying the presence of SF in the BF and timber harvesting was the need to preserve institutional continuity and protect the effects of the work of generations of foresters, even when there is no rational economic justification for such activities. Several non-forester respondents expressed their surprise at this position: 'This stubbornness is simply irrational in financial terms. (...) These forest districts [have been running at] a deficit since the mid-1990s. In a normal situation, if they had been located somewhere else in our country, it would have been transformed a long time ago' [guide 4/2010]. Some respondents were also surprised about the resistance to discontinue harvesting whilst

leaving the forest under the authority of the SF: '[Foresters] fought there about logging limits, as if this were something really important. It's actually completely irrelevant. Nearly 30 million cubic meters are harvested in Poland, and they're arguing about 50 thousand meters from the Białowieża Forest. It doesn't make any sense at all!' [politician 32/2011].

One possible way to explain this 'irrational' institutional continuity is the theory of path dependence (Krasner 1984; Pierson, 2000). According to this theory, political decisions (such as how you should use a specific area) taken in the past in certain circumstances and the resulting organisational solutions tend to persist over time, despite the fact that circumstances may have changed and these solutions have lost their effectiveness. As suggested by Krasner (1984, p. 235), 'the natural path for institutions is to act in the future, as they have acted in the past'. This involves, amongst other things, the fact that the heads of organisations do not want to risk their budgets, influence and personal status. In the case of the BF, this is how we can interpret information about the grassroot, informal pressure of SF workers on their superiors, who considered changes in the functioning of BF districts in order to reduce the inefficiencies of existing solutions.

According to Krasner (1984), institutional change is also associated with additional costs, which are not required for status quo, and creates uncertainty about how the new order will operate. At the moment of choosing a specific solution, alternative options, which could have been adopted and may have better responded to the new circumstances, lose their validity. In the context of the discussion about the forest, we can conclude that the decision made by the state almost a hundred years ago that the SF would harvest the forest has created a path that continues today. After making this decision, alternative paths, such as the establishment of a strict nature reserve, have steadily lost their importance, if only because of the gradual loss of the BF's natural features because of logging, which continues to be one of the arguments raised by the foresters against enlarging the BNP. The role of SF employers in the forest developed after the 'harvesting path' was chosen, their high social status and influence relating to the uniqueness of the area that they manage contributed to the maintenance of this path. This is happening despite the loss of economic significance of the existing organisational order that motivated the original decision of the state.

The motives of foresters for their opposition to enlarging the BNP, as identified in this study, are recognised to varying degrees by the social actors in favour of enlargement. Interviewed NGO representatives and scientists are aware of the different vision of the forest presented by foresters and understand their efforts to maintain well-paid jobs. They also partly understand the prestigious significance of the conflict for the SF, although it seems that some NGOs understand this to a lesser degree – which may then translate into their statements strongly undermining the competence of foresters that, in turn, elicit foresters' sense of injustice and a desire to take a hard stand in defending their position. Scientists and respondents from NGOs seem instead to give much greater weight than foresters to the importance of hunting in the BF. Non-forester respondents never mentioned the motivation of foresters related to the economic needs of local communities, and if they did, it was in the context of the interests of a small group of influential individuals from the local wood-processing industry. This may indicate a lack of faith in the real motivation of foresters as to the needs of local communities or an oversight about these local needs and their relationship with forest management.

Amongst the identified set of motives, those having the greatest potential for conflict are primarily the issues relating to the perception of the essence of the unique values of the BF and the ways of protecting it as well as the role of people in its protection. Broad discursive coalitions have formed over these issues (Hajer 1995), supported by epistemic communities (Haas 1992) and distinguished by their paradigm related to nature. Conflict and the political game between coalitions of foresters and naturalists also elicit the motive of ambition, including resistance to the need of acknowledging a point made by the other side. Different positions have crystallised institutionally in the form of forest districts and national parks, which are competing with each other for space.

On the basis of the identified motives guiding the foresters, one can identify actions that could potentially moderate their resistance to changes, such as equalising the working conditions in the SF and national parks, providing foresters with jobs in the enlarged park, providing access to wood for the local population (see Niedziałkowski et al. 2014) and guaranteeing the continuation of research by scientists in the field of forest sciences. It is much harder, however, to identify strategies that could bridge together different ways foresters and naturalists perceive the forest and respond to the issues raised of ambition, prestige and strategy (competition between the SF and national parks for the area). It can, therefore, be assumed that these considerations will be decisive for the duration of the conflict over the management of the BF in the future.

5. Conclusions

The aim of the study was to present the motives of foresters for their negative position on expanding the BNP to the entire Polish part of the BF as well as to explore how these themes are perceived by representatives of other groups of social actors. Based on the in-depth interviews conducted, a multidimensional set of incentives was identified, which includes the arguments and beliefs of SF employees at the local level (e.g. fear of the loss of work or the deterioration of working conditions, the desire to maintain their high status in the community), those at the central and regional levels (competition with national parks for the forests, the pressure of local foresters) and the motives of

all these groups (their vision of nature and the work of a forester, the prestige of the forester and the SF). The identified set of motives affects many groups of actors and refers to economic factors (job loss or the deterioration of the terms of employment, the economic situation of local communities), intangible factors (issues of prestige, ambition) as well as strategic and political motives (competition with the parks, hunting).

Most of the social actors favouring BNP expansion perceived the foresters' motivations and were able to understand some of them (the fear of losing employment and deteriorated employment conditions), several were met with opposition (the vision of the forest, the issues of prestige, ambition, hunting) but did not notice others (the impact of forestry on the local economy). The perception of the essence of the unique values of the BF and the ways of protecting it has the greatest confrontational potential in the discourse on the BF. Two discursive coalitions have formed around these issues – a 'forestry' one and a 'conservation' one. The discourse of the actors associated with the SF is reinforced in their viewpoints by an influential epistemic community, which includes scientists from the field of forest science.

Some of the foresters' arguments concerning the continuity of SF administrative authority of the forest suggest the involvement of the path dependence mechanism, which perpetuates the effects of past decisions despite changing circumstances, and thereby limiting the effectiveness of the established order. This mechanism, in conjunction with the significant discursive differences between the coalitions, suggests that the dispute over the BF is likely to continue.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no potential conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements and source of funding

The study was conducted with the financial support of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (grant no. N N305 353339) and the European Commission (project BIORESC, 6 PR: Grant No. MTKD-CT-2005-029957 and the project BIO-CONSUS 7 PR: Grant No. 245737). The author would like to thank the respondents for their time and information provided.

References

Adamczyk W. 1994. Rezerwat biosfery Puszczy Białowieskiej a jego mieszkańcy – diagnoza współdziałania (studium socjologiczne). Warszawa-Białystok-Lublin, Instytut Badawczy Leśnictwa.

Adger N.W., Brown K., Fairbrass J., Jordan A., Paavola J., Rosendo S., Seyfang G. 2003. Governance for sustainability: towards a 'thick' analysis of environmental decision making. *Environment and Planning A* 35: 1095–1110. DOI 10.1068/a35289.

Translated by: Barbara Przybylska

Blavascunas E. 2014. When foresters reterritorialize the periphery: post-socialist forest politics in Białowieża, Poland. *Journal of Political Ecology* 21: 475–492.

Blicharska M., Angelstam P. 2010. Conservation at risk: Conflict analysis in the Białowieża Forest, a European biodiversity hotspot. *International Journal of Biodiversity Science, Ecosystem Services & Management* 6(1-2): 68–74. DOI 10.1080/21513732.2010.520028.

Blicharska M., Van Herzele A. 2015. What a forest? Whose forest? Struggles over concepts and meanings in the debate about the conservation of the Białowieża Forest in Poland. *Forest Policy and Economics* 57: 22–30. DOI 10.1016/j.forpol.2015.04.003.

Dryzek J.S. 2013. The Politics of the Earth. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Few R. 2002. Researching actor power: Analyzing mechanisms of interaction in negotiations over space. *Area* 34(1): 29–38. DOI 10.1111/1475-4762.00054.

Franklin S. 2002. Białowieża Forest, Poland: Representation, myth, and the politics of dispossession. *Environment and Planning A* 34(8): 1459–1485. DOI: 10.1068/a34259.

Gliński P. 2001. Konflikt o puszczę. Raport z badań nad konfliktem społecznym z poszerzeniem BNP . *Pogranicze: Studia Społeczne* 10: 47–114.

Haas P.M. 1992. Epistemic communities and international policy coordination. *International Organization* 46(1): 1–35. DOI 10.1017/S0020818300001442.

Hajer M. 1995. The politics of environmental discourse. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Hajer M., Versteeg W. 2005. A decade of discourse analysis of environmental politics: Achievements, challenges, perspectives. *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 7(3): 175–184. DOI: 10.1080/15239080500339646.

Krasner S.D. 1984. Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics. *Comparative Politics* 16(2): 223–246. DOI 10.2307/421608.

Niedziałkowski K., Paavola J., Jędrzejewska B. 2012. Participation and Protected Areas Governance: the Impact of Changing Influence of Local Authorities on the Conservation of the Białowieża Primeval Forest, Poland. *Ecology and Society* 17(1). DOI 10.5751/ES-04461-170102.

Niedziałkowski K., Blicharska M., Mikusiński G., Jędrzejewska B. 2014. Why is it difficult to enlarge a protected area? Ecosystem services perspective on the conflict around the extension of the Białowieża National Park in Poland. *Land Use Policy* 38: 314–329. DOI 10.1016/j.landusepol.2013.12.002.

Pierson P. 2000. Increasing returns, path dependence, and the study of politics. *The American Political Science Review* 94(2): 251–267. DOI 10.2307/2586011.

Rancew-Sikora D. 2002. Konflikt w polskim dyskursie ekologicznym: pole analizy konwersacyjnej. *Studia Socjologiczne* 167(4): 67–84.

Sadowski A. 2001. Społeczno-kulturowe następstwa poszerzenia Białowieskiego Parku Narodowego. *Pogranicze: Studia Społeczne* 10: 7–46.

Szafer W. 1957. Pierwsze karty z historii Białowieskiego Parku Narodowego. *Kosmos* 6(5): 469–475.