Implementing Environmental Treaties: Legislative and Organizational Dimensions

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Abstract:

This paper presents preliminary conceptual and empirical findings of a project that will develop a theoretical framework to understand the interaction between domestic and international political arenas that focuses on the dynamics of treaty implementation in providing alternative decision venues for political action. It does so by engaging two strands of the literature from different sub-disciplines—international relations and domestic agenda setting and implementation. The first strand incorporates insights from the international relations literature that examines the interplay of domestic and international politics. It builds on Robert Putnam's (1993) model of two-level games which draws our attention to strategic interaction between international and domestic spheres, and Keck and Sikkink's "boomerang model" that examines the interaction among domestic, transnational, and international advocacy groups in affecting domestic policy change. What these models omit is an appreciation for the roles of various decision-making venues that make up the landscape of domestic politics. The implementation of international treaties can create new venues or alter existing ones through new or amended legislation or by empowering bureaucracies to oversee implementation as part of their overall mission. The venues may provide opportunities or constraints for advocacy groups to appeal for change.

The project examines the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in Australia, Canada, and the United States, focusing on sites designated for natural attributes.