

Introduction

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Issue 20-1 begins with a forum article on protecting endangered species. This is followed by two pairs of articles exploring different facets of the governance of deforestation and the role of global attitudes/voting preferences on environmental politics. The research section concludes with a research note exploring the development, evolution, and use of a comprehensive database of international environmental agreements.

Whereas an increased role for non-state actors in environmental treaties is usually understood to counter power differentials, Alfie Christopher Byron Gaffney and Darrick Evensen argue it had the opposite effect in the case discussed in “Addressing the Elephant in the Room: Learning from CITES CoP17.” The increased influence of Northern conservation-focused NGOs supported a “hegemonic governance coalition” at the 2016 negotiations. It supported a complete ban on the ivory trade that had the effect of deepening North–South power asymmetries. The authors propose several governance reforms to remedy these imbalances, including broadening the range of expertise to better reflect democratic pluralism and knowledge from the Global South, and more polycentric governance structures.

Justice and equity concerns are also central to David Brown and Marion MacLellan’s analysis of the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation agreements, “A Multiscalar and Justice-Led Analysis of REDD+: A Case Study of the Norwegian–Ethiopian Partnership.” Utilizing critical discourse analysis, they show that community-level egalitarian ethics at the local level in Ethiopia challenge dominant norms that underpin REDD+. These findings need to be considered if REDD+ programs and agreements are to value the needs and interests of forest-dependent communities.

In “Between the Global Commodity Boom and Subnational State Capacities: Payment for Environmental Services to Fight Deforestation in Argentina,” Isabella Alcañiz and Ricardo A. Gutierrez demonstrate how some subnational governments were able to introduce forestry sector reforms at a time where there were economic pressures in Argentina to expand the agricultural sector, primarily for commodity exports. The article offers lessons about the role of the state, highlighting the importance of subnational capacity, for stopping deforestation at this critical moment when the global community of nation states and non-state actors are seeking to mitigate and adapt to climate change. In doing so,

they explore a government sponsored program for payment for environmental services (PES) across a set of Argentine provinces that provided monetary incentives for landholders to conserve trees.

With the growth of private authority over the last decade, scholars have also sought to understand the extent to which such forms of governance are viewed by the public as legitimate and effective. Fabian Neuner, in his article “Public Opinion and the Legitimacy of Global Private Environmental Governance,” looks at how public opposition shapes the effectiveness of organizations such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) or the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Using survey experiments, he investigates the role of people’s attitudes and the factors that shape attitudes vis-à-vis the ISO and FSC; Neuner argues that the scholarship on the legitimacy of global governance needs to pay more attention to public attitudes.

In “Go Means Green: Diasporas’ Affinity for Ecological Groups,” Anca Turcu and Robert Urbatsch explore how the large and growing movements of peoples across national borders influences the electoral prospects of environmentalist parties. Using a new data set of election results in twenty-four countries, they find that diasporic voters disproportionately support environmentalist parties back home. These results provide an intriguing look at a different kind of interaction between the transnational movements of peoples and environmental politics than we usually consider (e.g., climate refugees) and has important implications for considering the importance of globalizing identities for environmental policy-making.

In the research note for this issue, “What We Know (and Could Know) about International Environmental Agreements,” Ronald Mitchell and co-authors present the content and potential uses for the GEP community of the International Environmental Agreements Database. This database was first introduced in 2002, and the research note lays out how it has developed into the most comprehensive database of environmental agreements, how it has been used to explore the evolution of international environmental governance, and its potential for enhancing both research and teaching moving forward.

Lastly, be on the lookout for a Special Anniversary Issue of *Global Environmental Politics* in spring 2020. We asked the previous editors to help us select a range of articles from the past twenty years to showcase the evolution of the journal.