

# Global Civil Society and Protection of the Global Environment

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Environmental protection and sustainable development is one sector of an emerging form of global, transnational politics that is rooted in the civil societies of many countries. It is not a given that environmental protection and sustainable development can or will be provided at a global scale by states, inasmuch as one of their primary purposes to date has been the exploitation of the very resources that must now be conserved and protected. Moreover, the mechanisms likely to be proposed and implemented by states at the international level to protect the environment and promote sustainability may not be able to achieve such a goal for several reasons. If the prospects for failure are high, it will be necessary to devise new forms of political and social practice that can achieve effective environmental protection and sustainability. Among these practices, we can identify efforts to construct common property resource systems based on self-enforced solutions to the collective action problem, as well as the transmission via networks of knowledge and schemes that can be replicated in many places.

The framing theme focuses on the ways in which the world views underlying broad social practices change, and how those changes play themselves out over the longer term. The environmental sector of global civil society - a transnational system of rules, norms, and practices, oriented around a very large number of often dissimilar actors, focused on environmental protection and sustainability - is analyzed. This society is, whether consciously or not, changing the underlying rules of modern civilization. In doing so, it is laying the basis for broad social and political change, although the chances of success are quite uncertain.

Secondly, there is the implementation of environmental policy commitments contained in international environmental agreements. What is the likelihood of a state implementing successful policies? How can a state achieve success when there are hard, short-term tradeoffs to be made between high rates of economic growth and strategies of conservation and sustainability which promise greater justice, but fewer rewards to the elites who often drive policy? Environmental civil society can play a role here via development projects based on common property resource systems and scientific assessment for long-term maintenance balanced by local knowledge.