

ECOPOLITICS PODCAST: Additional Pedagogical Resources (Episode 7)

[Episode 7: Multilateral Agreements and International Governance in Global EcoPolitics](#)

Overview: Dr. Radoslav Dimitrov (Western University) demystifies the politics of negotiating multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). He also explains why some MEAs are essentially "hollow" or "empty" despite appearing to onlookers as legitimate institutions.

Key Takeaways

- Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) are diverse, with some conventions and protocols having very specific objectives and outcomes while other MEAs offer only a broad, often weak “political declaration” on specific global environmental issues (Dr. Dimitrov, 3:26-4:25).
- International environmental negotiations are complex political meetings that are affected by differential access to resources and representation. While mostly public events, key discussions may be hidden from the public, with civil society, industry groups and the media being excluded from specific conversations.
- Some of our global governance institutions were never designed for success. These so-called empty institutions are then “used as a political tool to neutralize any political pressures for meaningful policy at the international level and that effectively legitimizes the gap in governance or collective action on important issues” (Dr. Dimitrov, 00:00-00:41).

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think makes a multilateral environmental agreement “hollow” or “empty”, and how could that be prevented?
2. What do you think is more important for a successful multilateral environmental agreement, the interests of the key actors involved, the nature and scope of the environmental problem, or the ease with which proposed policy solutions can be implemented?
3. What role do you think each of the following play in making multilateral environmental agreements a challenge to implement: a) the lack of global enforcement mechanisms; b) the competitive relationship among states in the international system; c) the tensions between environmental and economic priorities; and d) difficulties monitoring results at a national level.
4. What do you see as the role of knowledge (including how it is constructive discursively) in the establishment of multilateral environmental agreements? How does this affect the power dynamics among actors seeking to shape MEAs?

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Learn more about our Guest

Dr. Radoslav Dimitrov

- https://politicalscience.uwo.ca/people/faculty/full-time_faculty/radoslav_dimitrov.html

Select articles and videos

- **Dimitrov, Radoslav S.** “Empty Institutions in Global Environmental Politics.” *International Studies Review* 22, no. 3 (2020): 626–650.
- **Dimitrov, Radoslav S.** “International Negotiations.” In *The Handbook of Global Climate and Environment Policy*, 339–357. Falkner, John (ed). Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2013.
- **Dimitrov, Radoslav.** *Science and International Environmental Policy: Regimes and Nonregimes in Global Governance*. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006.

Explore resources mentioned in this episode:

- **Dimitrov, Radoslav S.** “The Paris Agreement on Climate Change: Behind Closed Doors.” *Global Environmental Politics* 16, no. 3 (2016): 1–11.
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). 2018. “Global Warming of 1.5C.” Switzerland: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.
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- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change <https://www.ipcc.ch/>
- Earth Negotiations Bulletin <https://enb.iisd.org/>
- United Nations Environment Programme “Multilateral Environmental Agreements.” Web. <https://www.unep.org/gef/multilateral-environmental-agreements>
- International Environmental Agreements database <https://iea.uoregon.edu/>
- United Nations. “The Paris Agreement.” Web.
<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
- United Nations. “What is the Kyoto Protocol?” Web. https://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol
- United Nations. “United Nations Security Council” Web.
<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/>

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Learn more about Global Governance and Multilateral Agreements

- Chasek, Pamela S., and Lynn M. Wagner. *The Roads from Rio: Lessons Learned from Twenty Years of Multilateral Environmental Negotiations*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- Gupta, Aarti, and M. Mason. *Transparency in Global Environmental Governance: Critical Perspectives*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2014.
- **Dimitrov, Radaslov S.** 2005. "Hostage to Norms: States, Institutions and Global Forest Politics." *Global Environmental Politics*. 5(4): 1-24
- Thew, Harriet, Lucie Middlemiss, and Jouni Paavola. "'Youth Is Not a Political Position': Exploring Justice Claims-Making in the UN Climate Change Negotiations." *Global Environmental Change* 61. 2020.
- Corell, Elisabeth and Michele M. Betsill. 2001. "A Comparative Look at NGO Influence in International Environmental Negotiations: Desertification and Climate Change." *Global Environmental Politics* 1(4): 86-107
- Levy, David L. and Peter J. Newell. 2002. "Business Strategy and International Environmental Governance: Towards a Neo-Gramscian Synthesis." *Global Environmental Politics*. 2(4): 84-101
- Simpson, Leanne. 2008. "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships." *Wicazo Sa Review* 23 (2)2: 29-42
- Litfin, Karen. 1995. "Framing Science: Precautionary Discourse and the Ozone Treaty" *Millennium*. 24(2): 251-277