

Civil Society and the Environment

Session 1 – Introduction

I. Foundations of civil society

- 1) Emergence of the nation state
- 2) Feudal system – what was life like? What issues were important?
Religion and supremacy of church; Feudal rulers
What was civil society like? Did it exist?
- 3) Birth of the nation state – Treaty / Peace of Westphalia in 1648.
 - a. Established modern system of the nation state. It initiated the modern fashion of diplomacy and as such, subsequent wars generally were not about reasons of religion, but rather focused on reasons of state.
 - b. Reoriented the way we conceptualize relations among different interests – the state became the dominant power and also the antagonist since it was the source of decisions and rights.

II. What is civil society – non-state, non-economic actors

What are examples? Some have idealized versions of “publics”? France in the 1920s and the café culture where people were informed and engaged. Idealized view.

III. Rise of civil society

- 1) Two key forces –
 - a. Spread of democracy – establishes rule of law, including that related to freedoms of association and participation
 - b. Globalization and spread of free market establishes class system
- 2) Result – Democratic deficit - Divide between what people want and what can be delivered by our existing democratic institutions. Creates frustration. Reinforces external antagonists and provides a call to action!

IV. Where does environment fit in?

View of right to participate and affect environmental decision-making

Where / when did this start?

What are other examples where we see this?

V. What changes (ostensibly) have taken place with regard to the role of civil society and environmental policy/ governance? Themes/ trends/ arguments (not completely discrete)

- 1) The state is losing as well as divesting power so perhaps is no longer the primary source of governing. Shift from government to governance.
International arenas as well as within the state
Devolution and voluntary programs
- 2) Institutionalization of environmental consciousness and environmentalism
- 3) Rise of nongovernmental power and innovations in environmental protection

VI. What is environmental governance?

“... rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way powers are exercised with respect to environment, particularly with regard to openness, participation, and accountability.”

VII. How does this play out? What is the relationship and role of civil society in environmental governance? Focus of the course – two key themes in views of environmental governance – both of which are linked to growing roles of non-state actors:

1) Conflict - Looking at how civil society actors influence environmental decision-making and their efforts at holding governments and corporate actors accountable for their actions;

2) Collaboration - New roles and innovative practices that are generated and implemented by civil society actors. Evidenced by their increasing role in “wielding a variety of policy tools.”

VIII. Class examines:

- 1) Different actors (e.g. social movements, associations, citizens; agenda setting, etc.)
- 2) What these actors do (agenda-setting, issue identification, implementation)
- 3) How they do it (protest, lobby, testify, monitor)
- 4) Different levels of analysis from the global to the local (IGO, UN, CAP)
- 5) Different national contexts (countries)