Regionalism Reconsidered: The Alpine Convention as a Model of Earth System Governance

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Abstract

Whereas subnational/crossborder regionalism has become a dominant trend in European and international economic and political integration, contemporary earth system governance continues to be characterized by functionally separated issue areas organized as international regimes. The evolution of this system has mirrored the historical process of nation state building, which entailed the reorganization of local interests and identities along functional and national lines. Growing political attention to environmental problems, however, has revealed the limits of functionally separating what is ecologically interdependent. Not surprisingly, regime overlap and regime conflict have become tremendous challenges. By contrast, the current process of regionalization has provided a vehicle for innovative approaches to sustainable development.

Using subnational and crossborder regionalism as a point of departure, this paper explores supranational regionalism as a model for earth system governance by examining the Alpine Convention as a case study. Although regional environmental agreements have been negotiated in the past, they have narrowly focused on water quality and fisheries. The Alpine Convention, an international agreement among eight European states and the European Union signed in 1991, seeks the protection and sustainable development of a globally significant mountain region. The Convention has led to a series of sectoral protocols, which the majority of signatories have signed and ratified. Moreover, the Convention has fostered the establishment of a large number of transalpine organizations as well as a nascent alpine identity. In order to critically assess the promise of supranational regionalism in environmental governance, the paper traces the evolution of the Convention from the perspective of participants' debates over territoriality, substantive scope, institutional form, and democratic access. The paper concludes with a cautiously optimistic note and points to other supranational regional initiatives the Alpine Convention has inspired.

Introduction

For more than a decade, reform of the international environmental governance system has presented a considerable challenge to policy makers and scholars alike. Despite the staggering density of formal and informal institutional arrangements addressing virtually every aspect of nature-society relations, progress toward halting many forms of environmental degradation has been slow, if existing at all. The reasons for this lack of success can be found in a variety of proximate and underlying causes, ranging from the prevalence of rent-seeking behavior to the state of knowledge, institutional constraints, and the global structure of political and economic relations. While efforts to refine national legislation and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) continue, however, discussions provoked by the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development have yielded a growing recognition that something about the very architecture of earth system governance (ESG) is amiss. The current debate about post-Kyoto mechanisms for climate change mitigation and adaptation has further underlined the urgency of finding appropriate institutional solutions.

The 1972 Stockholm Conference and the attendant development of a world environmental consciousness gave rise to a tendency for framing environmental problems in global terms, hence requiring global action to address them. This tendency accelerated during the 1980s and 1990s, generating a series of global treaties and associated regimes which have become household names among students of international environmental politics. At the same time, the intensification and institutionalization of economic globalization produced a system of governance, principally manifested in the World Trade Organization (WTO), many consider at odds with sustainable development. In turn, the proliferation of MEAs and their relative weakness vis-à-vis WTO rules have informed the two main thrusts of ESG reform,

namely the functional clustering of MEAs and the establishment of a world environment organization.

Whereas global environmental agreements have been the main focus in the scholarly literature, close to two-thirds of the more than 500 multilateral agreements identified by UNEP in 2001 are of a regional scope.[1] Regional environmental agreements have a long history, particularly those designed to regulate the use of international water bodies. Moreover, regional organizations such as the European Union have developed an extensive array of environmental governance functions and institutions. Yet the theoretical literature on international environmental politics, like that of regional international politics more generally, has so far paid little attention to regional environmental governance. On the one hand, international relations scholars with a regional bent have been prolific theory builders with regard to collective security and economic integration, but have largely ignored environmental issues. On the other hand, environmental politics scholars have produced a sizable body of case studies on regional agreements, especially regional seas conventions, but generated few generalized statements about regional environmental governance. Furthermore, reflecting the general sectoral narrowness of most regional MEAs, "regional sustainable development" has so far failed to become part of the scholarly vocabulary.

Characteristically, the Alpine Convention remains absent from the international environmental politics literature, even though the agreement started out with a decidedly environmental orientation. This paper addresses this lacuna, arguing that the Convention should be of considerable interest to international environmental politics scholars and policy makers. Already proposed by an international environmental non-governmental organization (NGO) in the early 1950s, negotiations between Europe's principal Alpine states and the European Union witnessed the signing of a framework convention in 1991, as well as the

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1   UNEP 2001a.

development of ten technical protocols since then. This fact alone should pique interest, for most of the global framework conventions have produced far fewer protocols. For instance, the climate change convention, signed in 1991, has produced just one protocol that took close to fifteen years to enter into force; the biodiversity convention, also signed in 1991, did not lead to the adoption of a protocol until nine years later.

A second feature of the Alpine Convention that is of interest to ESG theory and practice is its holistic nature. Rather than following an "end of the pipe" approach, whereby the consequences of specific forms of environmental degradation are tackled, the goal of the Alpine Convention is to comprehensively align socioeconomic development and in the mountain range with the prerogatives of sustainable development. Although Convention members are of course also parties to global MEAs, their holistic approach under the Alpine convention preempts some of the difficulties that have generated international MEA clustering proposals. By specifying the technical areas of protocol development – and, indeed, initiating protocol development in parallel to framework negotiations – the framework document created a process-based iterative approach to cross-sectoral coordination under the umbrella of sustainable development.

Finally, the Alpine Convention represents a case of "ecoregional institutionalization." Mountain ranges, their residents, and downstream dependents have long been recognized as particularly vulnerable to global environmental change. Accordingly, a separate chapter on sustainable mountain development was included in Agenda 21 and 2002 was designated the International Year of Mountains. Although the Alpine Convention and its protocols are signed by nation states, the geographic scope of the agreement (notwithstanding some politically motivated exceptions addressed later in the paper) is defined on the basis of subnational units that form part of the mountain range. As a result, transnational mobilization

of state and nonstate actors has largely followed ecoregional boundaries and created new forms of expression for democratic legitimacy and accountability.

The Alpine Convention's comprehensive sustainable development orientation, parallel approach to the framework-protocol model, process-based character, and ecoregional scope are characteristics that may usefully contribute to ESG reform discussions, yet the Convention is far from perfect. One of the reasons why the Alpine Convention has perhaps received relatively little attention is that many consider it an ineffective paper tiger. Principles and mechanisms for implementation and enforcement are largely unspecified, several parties (notably Switzerland) have yet to ratify key protocols, and a permanent secretariat was not established until very recently. At the same time, national debates about protocol accession and ratification have influenced key legislative developments and policy implementation, for instance in protected area development and transalpine transport, and a transalpine identity has emerged to reinforce the regional institutional architecture.

In analyzing the potential of the Alpine Convention to serve as an ESG model, the paper proceeds as follows. The first section reviews key theoretical perspectives of regional international politics, emphasizing the literature's traditional focus on collective security and economic integration at the expense of environmental cooperation. The second section addresses debates on the reform of international environmental governance. The third section provides an overview of the origins and development of the Alpine Convention with a special focus on three distinguishing features: its ecoregional and transnational nature, comprehensive sustainable development scope, and simultaneous framework and protocol negotiation. Section four evaluates the Alpine Convention from the perspective of earth system governance.

Regionalism then and now

Since the study of regional international politics emerged after World War II, it has primarily concerned itself with matters of economic integration and collective security. Environmental concerns, even though they had been enshrined in international agreements, largely eschewed scholarly attention. The reasons for this tendency are not difficult to discern. On the one hand, the Cold War witnessed the consolidation of two large geopolitical regions, which additionally vied for influence in newly decolonized countries, as well as the institutionalization of collective security arrangements such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Warsaw Pact. On the other hand, European integration focused attention on inter-state cooperation in the economic realm. The dominance of security and economic themes in regionalist discourse and practice was further reinforced by their linkages, as European integration was in part driven by the Cold War rationale, and the New International Economic Order was an important element of the non-aligned movement. When the Cold War ended and economic globalization intensified, conceptual views of regional international politics experienced a major shift. By that time, the field of international environmental politics had become a major area of scholarly inquiry; however, preoccupation with global environmental problems and corresponding institutional initiatives prevented the overdue incorporation of environmental dimensions into theories of regional international politics.

The predominant theoretical perspectives on regional international politics were profoundly influenced by the strategic and economic developments unfolding in the decades following World War II. Neo-functionalism as the most influential lens has been characterized by a strong normative undercurrent, associating world peace and welfare economics with growing regional functional interdependence.[2] At the same time, the nation

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2   The most well-known scholars associated with the neo-functionalist viewpoint are Ernst Haas, L. Lindberg, S. Scheingold, Philippe Schmitter, and Joseph Nye; their views appeared in the Autumn 1970 special issue of *International Organization* dedicated to regional integration theory and research.

state has served as the underlying theoretical model, which implies the prior legal and institutional identification of the state within which integration takes place. But "[i]n presuming the empirical reality of the nation state," Cantori and Spiegel have argued, "neo-functionalists have perhaps confused what they would like to see with what really exists."[3] Although later neo-functionalist formulations posited regional outcomes different from the nation state, prominent neo-functionalist Ernst Haas readily admitted that the "region" was at best a "putative dependent variable."[4] Neo-functionalists have also been criticized for ignoring extreme forms of conflict such as coercion and war. More generally, while the neo-functionalist viewpoint has been found useful in analyzing situations where regional integration has emerged as a conscious process and some forms of regional institutions already exist, it has little to say about the numerous conflict-torn regions in existence today.

Neo-functionalists' interest in, and normative approval of, the processes of regional integration that may give rise to some form of political and institutional union is shared by adherents to a second theoretical perspective, that of transactionalism.[5] Whereas neo-functionalists focus on region institutions and bureaucracies, however, transactionalists emphasize "contacts, interchange, and communication between peoples as indicators of successful integration."[6] Transactionalists are more concerned with collective security than with economic welfare and do not consider regional political unions as necessary outcomes. They rely less on the nation state as a theoretical model and are therefore more willing to ignore or supersede national boundaries. The problem of the putative dependent variable is less pronounced in transactionalist accounts, yet its focus on process rather than outcomes has raised the question whether explanations concern social interaction or political integration.

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3 Cantori & Spiegel 1973:471.
4 Haas 1970:631.
5 This perspective is associated, above all, with the work of Karl Deutsch.
6 Cantori & Spiegel 1973:476.

On the other hand, transactionalists share neo-functionalists' apolitical orientation, as well as the relative neglect of extra-regional powers.

The third theoretical perspective on regional international politics that has dominated the field is distinct from both integrationist approaches referred to above. In what Cantori and Spiegel described as "empirical systems approach" but is at heart a neo-realist perspective, integration and/or increased transaction are not the only, or even the preferred answers to international conflict.[7] Instead, systems analysts emphasize conflict resolution in local balances of power and are not opposed to de-institutionalization or reduced levels of transaction; correspondingly, neo-realist regionalists are also agnostic with respect to the benefits of international institutionalization for peace and economic welfare. At the same time, regional systems theory differs from more general systems approaches in international relations theory in that it is more empirically oriented. In the words of Cantori and Spiegel, "the regional systems approach constitutes a more modest theoretical approach to first describe and explain particular regions' international politics, and then to provide classificatory categories for the purposes of comparison"[8] The preoccupation with defining a region, however has hindered theoretical development and produced a tendency towards classification at the expense of explanation. As a result, studies have often failed to go beyond describing the relations among states in regional systems. The beneficial upshot of this tendency has been a focus on the ways in which participants themselves view their relations with other actors, rather than biasing the interpretation towards a particular set of factors, be they international institutionalization or transnational communications.

Since the late 1980s, the end of the Cold War and intensified economic globalization significantly changed the study of regional international politics; for some time, the concept "region" itself risked becoming devoid of meaning.[9] In light of the spatial transformations

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7   Perhaps the most prominent scholar associated with the empirical systems approach is Kenneth Waltz.
8   Cantori & Spiegel 1973:484.
9   Väyrynen 2003.

witnessed in global economic and security relations, the "jigsaw-puzzle view" underlying

metageographical regional conceptions appeared to have run its course. Regions, scholars

increasingly recognized, vanish and reemerge as they are transformed by various economic,

political, and cultural forces.[10] A constructivist view of regions has become an influential

trend in regionalist literature, represented for instance in the collective security studies of

Peter Katzenstein and colleagues. In their comparison of U.S. relations with Europe and

Southeast Asia, Hemmer and Katzenstein argue that "[a]lthough often described in

geographical terms, regions are political creations" and that "[l]ooking a specific instances in

which such constructions have occurred can tell us a great deal about the shape and the

shaping of international politics."[11] In particular, the authors suggest that perceptions of

collective identity represent an underappreciated factor in explaining why security

cooperation with Europe was organized multilaterally while it proceeded along bilateral lines

with regard to Southeast Asia.

A second trend in regional international politics since the end of the Cold War is the

particular importance to the changing view of regions is the growing differentiation between

'physical' and 'functional' regions. In his recent review of the regionalist literature in

international politics, Väyrynen contrasts geographic and strategic dimensions as part of

physical regionalism with economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions as part of

functional regionalism.[12] While he finds no difficulties citing studies on economic, and to a

lesser extent, cultural regionalism, however, he fails to give any examples belonging to the

environmental realm.

A third recent trend in the regionalist literature concerns the locus of regionalization.

Traditionally, regionalism has been considered a form of interstate cooperation between

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10 Levis & Vigen 1997.
11 Hemmer & Katzenstein 2002:575. The underlying argument is that geography is not destiny, which explains, for instance, why Italy, Greece and Turkey became members of the *North Atlantic* Treaty Organization, even though purely geographic criteria would have mitigated against their membership
12 Väyrynen 2003.

neighboring countries. While many comparative studies of regional organizations continue to identify political leaders as the primary agents, students of functional regions view regionalization as a response to economic globalization and consider nonstate actors, especially transnational corporations, the principal driving forces.[13] In the cultural realm as well, non-governmental actors are often found at the forefront of promoting regional identities.

If regional governance were to play a role in earth system governance, what does the literature on regional international politics has to offer? First, the preoccupation with collective security and economic integration does not appear to hold much promise. Even though interest in the security dimensions of environmental problems is currently experiencing a revival, for instance in the context of environmental refugees, transnational conflicts over water supplies, and environmental peace making, the substantive orientation of the collective security literature in general appears remote from environmental concerns. Similarly, theories of regional economic integration, especially those with a normative bias toward the breakdown of trade barriers, generally raise criticism regarding the negative environmental consequences of trade-focused economic growth. Military force and economic growth, in other words, are more often viewed as counterproductive to environmental protection. The recent focus on functional regionalism holds some promise because of its relevance, at least in principle, to environmental issues, but empirical work has generally focused on other functional aspects.

Second, much of the literature on regional international politics has been based on a state-centric view that fails to consider the increasingly autonomous agency of subnational actors that cooperate across borders. Neo-functionalist approaches have emphasized the development of international institutions as the outcome of intergovernmental bargaining.

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13 For an affirmative view of the primacy of political leaders, see Cameron & Tomlin 2000; for an opposing view, see Mattli 1999.

Although nonstate agency is recognized, that agency is primarily identified with supranational bodies such as the United Nations or the European Union. Yet many regionalist scholars have increasingly recognized the important role of other types of nonstate actors, including transnational corporations and non-governmental organizations. In light of recent trends in international environmental governance, where nonstate actors play a significant role, this tendency has the potential to make a contribution, although the international environmental politics literature has arguably already advanced much further in this respect.

Third and related, the regionalist literature's focus on formal agreements captures an important aspect of earth system governance, where issues of implementation, enforcement, and compliance are significant factors in governance effectiveness. At the same time, this bias ignores the proliferation of governance without government, which represents a distinct trend in recent environmental governance.[14] Finally, although recent theoretical divides among regional international politics scholars have lost some of the normative connotations characteristic of earlier neo-functionalist perspectives, the association of regional integration with positive externalities such as peace and economic welfare remains an notable undercurrent. The normative bent is of course a significant element in discussions about earth system governance, as the next section show. Although criticism of particular reform proposals abounds, there is little doubt that something needs to be done to address the global environmental governance deficit.

Earth system governance reform

Theoretical approaches to global governance in the international environmental politics literature have not been widely influenced by the regional international politics theorizing,

14 Biermann 2006.

yet the former shares some commonalities with the latter. Especially with regard to neo-functionalist views of regional integration, as has just been noted, earth system governance discourse has a distinct normative subtext. That is, improved earth system governance, for instance in the form of a world environmental organization, is argued to contribute to reducing environmental degradation. A second commonality is the reduced emphasis on the nation state as the main actor and hence greater attention to nonstate actors. In the recent literature on earth system governance, distinctively breaking with the tradition of international relations more generally, numerous scholars have demonstrated the influence of intergovernmental bodies, non-governmental organizations, transnational movements and advocacy coalitions, and multinational corporations. Under the rubric "governance without government," a variety of public-private, private-private, and hybrid mechanisms and institutional arrangements have been scrutinized. A third commonality is the growing importance of constructivist perspectives. While IEP scholars have mostly focused on the nature and consequences of framing environmental problems as such, constructivist students of regional international politics have analyzed the socially constructed nature of regions.[15]

Despite these commonalities, regional governance has not played a large role in IEP theorizing. This is not to say that the IEP literature is devoid of analyses of regional environmental governance. On the contrary, a sizable body of studies exist on the regional seas conventions and on European Union environmental policy. However, the character of most of these studies is case study-oriented and has therefore had little influence on debates about earth system governance reform. Instead, ESG discussions have conformed with IEP's preoccupation with "global" environmental problems and "global" institutional reform possibilities. Since the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development underlined the momentum behind ESG reform, the center stage has been shared by two separate but linked

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15 Hemmer & Katzenstein 2002.

proposals: the clustering of multilateral environmental agreements and the establishment of a world environment organization.

The clustering approach rose to prominence in the context of preparations for WSSD. In February 2001 UNEP's Governing Council established an intergovernmental group of ministers and charged it with reviewing the status of multilateral environmental agreements and developing recommendations for improvement. The group's 2001 report, which estimates the number of international treaties and other agreements relating to the environment at over 500, noted an unsurprising preference among surveyed treaty secretariats for increased cooperation on "substantive grounds and not along restructuring at the institutional level." Furthermore, several secretariats, including those of the regional seas conventions, are reported to find promise of closer cooperation and opportunities for synergies at the cluster level.[16] In light of growing institutional density, clustering agreements administratively, functionally, and/or substantively is argued to mitigate duplication and overlap, preempt potential conflicts, and increase effectiveness and cost efficiency.[17] While modest attempts at clustering certain aspects of global MEAs have been initiated, regional clustering has received relatively little attention. UNEP's idea of regional clustering consists of grouping regional agreements *from different* regions, whereas the UN Economic Commission for Europe's practice of providing an organizational home for several regional agreements has yet to be developed in other regions.[18]

Calls for a world environment organization (WEO) in analogy to the World Trade Organization have a somewhat longer history than that of clustering proposals, yet progress toward establishing such a body has been even more negligible. Scholars and policy makers have enumerated several gains that could be obtained from a WEO.[19] A global body for the

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16 UNEP 2001a.
17 Biermann 2000; von Moltke 2001.
18 Oberthür 2002; UNEP 2001b.
19 Biermann 2000, 2001, 2006; Esty 1994; Esty & Ivanova 2001; Whalley & Zissimos 2001.

environment is commonly expected to achieve improvements in three areas: international standard setting might be facilitated by bargains across issue areas and policy fields; implementation and enforcement might be enhanced, partly through additionally mobilized resources; and political standing and leverage vis-à-vis non-environmental institutions such as the WTO might be increased, thereby mitigating or avoiding potential conflict. Criticism of the WEO idea abounds, ranging from political impracticability to questions about actual benefits. Arguing quite critically from an institutionalist perspective, for instance, Oberthür and Gehring have further suggested that a new organization would achieve little in a world populated by regimes; that institutional reform, even if it involved new decision-making procedures and institutional boundaries, would still fail to rein in uncooperative states or prevent free-riding; and that any approach to integrating international governance functions would produce irrelevance, dysfunctionality and/or utopian expectations.[20]

Few proposals to reform earth system governance have so far focused on the potential of building on regional agreements. This is somewhat surprising, since close to two-thirds of all multilateral environmental agreements have a regional scope. Moreover, numerous regional seas conventions have moved beyond a single-sector focus to become multisectoral agreements addressing integrated coastal area management. Some proposals discussed as part of the post-Kyoto architecture have made reference to regionalization, yet their tentative nature provides ample evidence of the need to advance the state of theorizing on regional environmental governance.[21] To this end, the next section examines the Alpine Convention with a view to identifying a few elements of interest to scholars and practitioners.

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20 Oberthür & Gehring 2004.
21 Bodansky 2004.

The Alpine Convention

Efforts to establish a regional environmental agreement for the European Alps date to the early post-World War II period, hence to the same historical context within which regional arrangements for collective security and economic integration were taking shape. For several decades, however, the project failed to obtain the necessary high level political commitment. It was not until the mid-1980s that support for the idea, which had been promoted by an environmental NGO, fell on fertile ground among regional, national, and European leaders. Signed just months after the Earth Summit concluded in 1991, the Alpine Convention has since evolved into a regional, legally-binding framework for sustainable development, a focal point for substantial transnational mobilization, the locus of regional identity building among mountain populations; in the process, it has also come to serve as a model for other mountain regions.[22]

The Alpine Convention provides a natural experiment for the manifestation of transnational regional sustainable development, thus distinguishing it from the narrow sectoral focus of most other multilateral environmental agreements. This comprehensive focus represents the main feature of interest to discussions about earth system governance reform, where institutional density, linkage and overlap raise key challenges. Moreover, in contrast to most international agreements, which seek to mitigate already occurring problems through an "end-of-pipe" approach, the Alpine Convention is "anticipatory" as it seeks to place all human activity in a specific region on a sustainable development path.[23] Another feature concerns the parallel approach to framework and protocol development. While the substantive nature and process of protocol development under most international environmental framework conventions is left open, the Alpine Convention in its framework

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22 Notably the Carpathians and the Balkan mountain range.
23 Bätzing 1994:202.

document specifies twelve technical areas to be elaborated as protocols; in some cases, their development began even before the Convention was signed. A further feature relates to the Alpine Convention's permeability to nonstate actors. Even though nation states (and the European Union) sign and ratify the Convention and its Protocols, subnational regions, elected politicians from mountain regions, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector have played a key role in framing the architecture of the agreement and shaping its implementation. This section provides an overview of the main characteristics of the Alpine Convention from these three angles.

Origins of the Convention

In its founding documents, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (Cipra)[24] designated the development of a legally binding instrument for the Alpine region as one of the most important goals. When Cipra was founded, demands for energy generation and tourism expansion in the Alps experienced dramatic growth.[25] Although the organization successfully prevented the construction of several dams and contributed to the establishment of national parks, Cipra members realized that more systematic influence could only be achieved through a collective agreement binding Alpine states to more sustainable approaches to resource utilization. Yet Cipra's ambitions did not find a broader audience until the growth of the modern environmental movement during the 1970s drew attention to environmental degradation unfolding in the Alps and led to calls for a European spatial development policy for the entire Alpine region. During the second half of the 1970s, attempts were also made to foster transalpine collaboration through European resolutions.

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24 Originally called the Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Régions Alpines, since 1990 Commission Internationale pour la Protection des Alpes.

25 The Alps have since become one of the world's most important tourist destinations. By the late 1990s, some 120 million visitors traveled to the Alps each year, accounting for approximately one quarter of world tourism (Bätzing 1997, Siegrist 1998).

However, the failure of these early efforts precipitated an organizational crisis that lasted for several years. In the meantime, a series of international environmental agreements, including the Bern, Washington, and Helsinki Conventions, demonstrated a way forward and offered elements of a template for the Alps.

Table 1: Alpine Territory and Population

	A/NT	A/AT	P/NP	P/AP
Austria	65	28.7	40	23.9
France	8	21.4	4	18.0
Germany	3	5.8	2	10.1
Italy	17	27.3	8	30.1
Liechtenstein	100	0.08	100	0.2
Monaco	100	0.001	100	0.2
Switzerland	62	13.2	24	12.8
Slovenia	34	3.5	19	4.7

A/NT: Alpine space as share of national territory
A/AT: Alpine space as share of total Alpine space (190,600 km^2)
P/NP: Alpine population as share of national population
P/AP: Alpine population as share of total Alpine population (13.6 million)
Source: Ruffini et al EURAC 2005.

Together with representatives from all seven alpine states, Cipra began to work on a concept for the Alpine Convention in 1987. The negotiators learned two important lessons at a very early stage. First, they realized that a legally binding instrument would face insurmountable opposition from local and regional stakeholders if they were not included in the process. Second, building on the Alpine experiences of Unesco's Man and the Biosphere program, proponents of an integrative, rather than sectorally limited approach were able to convince conservationists that a strict separation of natural and cultural landscapes was not possible in the Alps, and hence that it was necessary to develop an instrument that would embed conservation in the larger context of sustainable development.

Between 1987 and 1988, the political commitment to create an Alpine Convention first expanded from non-governmental organizations to the European institutions, regional

governments, and finally national governments. In response to an initiative by the European People's Party, the European Parliament in April 1988 unanimously agreed to request that the European Commission elaborate a Convention for the protection of the Alps. Seven months later, the decisions of the Liechtenstein Circle were discussed at by the presidents of the transalpine regional working groups Arge Alp, Arge Alpen-Adria and Communauté de travail des Alpes occidentales (Cotrao), which resulted in public support from the regional governments represented in the three coalitions. National commitments cascaded from Germany, where the Bavarian ministerial council submitted a request for evaluating the feasibility of an Alpine convention to Germany's environment Minister Klaus Töpfer, who immediately invited his national counterparts in France, Italy Austria, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and Yugoslavia to the first International Alpine Conference, held in Berchtesgaden, Austria, in October 1989. The Berchtesgaden Conference, which concluded with a resolution that for the first time summarized the consensus on transalpine problems and possible solutions, has been considered the birth of the Alpine Convention, while the "Spirit of Berchtesgaden" has become a core element of the Convention's founding narrative.[26]

The Berchtesgaden Conference established high level working groups and asked them to prepare drafts for a framework convention and five protocols on mountain farming (coordinated by Italy), tourism (France), conservation of nature and landscapes (Germany), transport (Switzerland), and spatial planning (France). At the second International Alpine Conference, held in Salzburg, Austria, in November 1991, the Alpine Convention was signed by Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, and the European Community.[27] While Germany floated a draft of the first protocol, formulation of the other

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26 Streicher 2001.

protocols was lagging behind. The signatories nevertheless decided to begin work on

additional protocols for mountain forests, energy and water management, and soil protection.

The Alpine Convention is founded on the precautionary, 'polluter pays,' and

cooperative principles.[28] The *precautionary principle*, considered the most important one of

the three, aims at incorporating sustainability at the planning and negotiation stages of policy

making. It was recently elaborated in the Transport Protocol, which rules out scientific

uncertainty as a justification for avoiding measures to prevent, mitigate, or reduce substantial

or irreversible environmental or health consequences. According to the *polluter pays*

principle, individuals, groups, or organizations causing environmental harm are responsible

for assuming the cost of addressing such harm. As in the case of the precautionary principle,

scientific uncertainty is not sufficient to deter victims from taking recourse. Rather,

scientifically grounded suspicion is enough, while the burden of proof is placed on the

accused. Finally, the *cooperative principle is* founded on the acknowledgment that the

sources of and solutions to environmental problems require collaboration between

stakeholder groups and therefore constitutes an instrument of democratization.[29]

The formal structure of the Alpine Convention is similar to that of contemporary

MEAs. The highest political forum is the Conference of Contracting Parties, known as the

Alpine Conference. The Conference usually meets every two years in the country serving as

chair. Representatives of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the European

Commission, EU members, transnational Alpine territorial units, and non-governmental

organizations can participate as observers at Conference meetings. Prior to the organization

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27 The geographic scope of the Alpine Convention, based on commune boundaries, was defined by the
signatories in 1991. In many cases, the designation followed political, rather than topographical criteria,
which created a level of incongruence among the member states. For instance, Germany designated its
participating regions on the basis of *Landkreise*, which led to the inclusion of Bavaria's lowlands, whereas
Switzerland excluded foothill regions of *Emmental* and the *Zürcher Oberland*; moreover, some cities at the
edge of the Alps are included (Lucerne, Salzburg), while others are excluded (Graz, Vienna). The scope of
the Alpine convention includes 6,188 communes and covers 190,288 square kilometers.
28 For more detailed accounts of the Convention's framework document and protocols, see Price
29 Streicher 2001:31.

of a Conference meeting, member states are required to report on the status of implementation. Conference decisions have to be taken unanimously, but a three-quarter majority is sufficient in certain cases.[30]

Between Alpine Conference meetings a Conference Permanent Committee consisting of states that have ratified the convention meets as the principal executive body, usually twice a year.[31] The principal tasks carried out by the Committee include the collection and evaluation of progress reports, informing the Alpine Conference of decision taken, preparation of Alpine Conference meetings, elaboration of proposals for protocol harmonization, and formulation of recommendations for meeting the Convention's overall goals. The Permanent Committee can also establish working groups, whose responsibility consists of developing new protocols and implementing measures, as well as reporting progress to the Alpine Conference and Permanent Committee.

One aspect of the Alpine Convention's formal structure that persistently caused concern among promoters was the long delay in establishing a permanent secretariat. Although the framework document provides for this possibility, no agreement on the location was achieved until 2002, when Innsbruck secured the designation; a branch office was also established in Bolzano, Italy. This means that for more than ten years, all work related to Convention was the responsibility of revolving chairs. Because of the reluctance on the part of several signatories to assume this poCotst, Slovenia served as chair for two successive periods. When Switzerland was due to assume the chairmanship, the convention's provision

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30 The EU can vote for member states that are Alpine Convention signatories but choose not to exercise their right to vote.

31 Signatory states which have not ratified the Convention have observer status. The Permanent Committee designates official observers. Currently, these include: Commission International Pour la Protection des Alpes (Cipra), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Association des élus de la Montage (AEM), Fédération Internationale des Associations Nationales d'exploitation de téléphériques (FIANET), Club Arc Alpin (CAA), Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Ostalpenländer (ARGE Alp), Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Alpen-Adria-Länder (ARGE Alpen-Adria), Communauté de travail des Alpes occidentales (COTRAO), Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenstädte, Association européenne des régions de montagne (EUROMONTANA), Internationales wissenschaftliches Komitee Alpenforschung (WIKO), and the Council of Europe.

that a conference chairs had to have ratified the Convention provided an immediate challenge, overcome only when Switzerland hurriedly ratified the document after appeasing its mountain cantons with promises of additional financial assistance.

Protocol development

The parallel development of the Alpine Convention's framework document and the first of its protocols constitutes one of the key defining features of the agreement. In contrast to most framework-protocol based multilateral environmental agreements, which stipulate protocol development but leave open the nature and scope of extension through protocols, the Alpine Convention's framework document defined twelve technical areas for further elaboration: population and culture, regional planning, air pollution, soil conservation, water management, nature and landscape conservation, mountain farming, mountain forestry, tourism and recreation, transport, energy, and waste management. This approach has lent the Convention its comprehensive character and enabled signatories to measure progress towards implementing a sustainable mountain development vision. At the same time this approach, combined with the designation of specific countries as lead coordinators, has been one of the main challenges. While some protocols were developed quite rapidly, too rapidly in the eyes of some, others have been experienced significant delays. Furthermore, maintaining substantive and linguistic consistency between the framework document and the protocol, as well as between protocols, has required extensive back-and-forth negotiations above and beyond the two-level dynamics typical of international negotiations.[32] As of this writing, eight of the twelve technical areas have been translated into protocols (additional protocols were created to address dispute settlement and formalize Monaco's membership); Austria,

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32 Price 2000.

Germany, France, Liechtenstein, and Slovenia have signed and ratified all protocols, whereas Switzerland, Italy, Monaco and the European Union have somewhat lagged behind (Table 2).

Table 2: Status of Ratification of the Alpine Convention

	A	CH	G	F	FL	I	MC	SL	EU
Framework convention									
Signed	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1991	1994	1993	1991
Ratified	1994	1999	1994	1996	1994	1999	1998	1995	1996
Conservation of nature and landscape (developed under overall coordination by Germany)									
Signed	2000	1998	1994	1994	1998	1994	1994	1994	1994
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2005	2002	----	2004	2004	----
Mountain farming (Italy)									
Signed	2000	1998	1994	1994	1998	1994	1994	1994	1994
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2002	2002	----	----	2004	----
Spatial planning and sustainable development (France)									
Signed	2000	1998	1994	1994	1998	1994	1994	1994	1994
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2005	2002	----	2003	2004	----
Mountain forests (Austria)									
Signed	2000	1998	1996	1996	1998	1996	1996	1996	----
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2005	2002	----	----	2004	----
Tourism (France)									
Signed	2000	1998	1998	1998	1998	2001	1998	1998	2006
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2005	2002	----	2003	2004	2006
Energy (Italy)									
Signed	2000	2000	1998	1998	2002	2001	----	1998	2006
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2005	2002	----	----	2004	2006
Soil protection (Germany)									
Signed	2000	1998	1998	1998	1998	2000	1998	1998	2006
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2005	2002	----	2003	2004	2006
Transport (Switzerland, Liechtenstein)									
Signed	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2002	2006
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2005	2002	----	----	2004	----
Dispute Settlement									
Signed	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2002	----
Ratified	2002	----	2002	2002	2002	----	2003	2004	----
Monaco Membership									
Signed	1994	1994	1994	1994	1994	1994	1994	1994	1994
Ratified	1997	1999	1995	1995	1995	----	1995	1995	1998

The long negotiating process has frequently raised questions and criticism. Already at its annual meeting in October 1992, Cipra argued that the process lacked adequate efforts in public relations, insufficiently coordinated research and documentation, failed to address the question of establishing a secretariat, and insufficient formal and substantive consistency across protocol drafts.[33] The perceived bias towards conservation also continued to haunt the

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33 Danz & Ortner 1993.

convention framers. Responding to concerns from alpine regions, especially Swiss cantons, the Working Group of Senior Officials asked Switzerland to prepare a concept for securing the incorporation of socioeconomic dimensions into the convention and its protocols. The resulting report proposed the creation of a separate protocol for "Economy and Society."[34] This option did not find sufficient support at the international level. Although many of its main points were subsequently incorporated into the spatial development protocol, which was renamed "spatial planning and sustainable development," perceived environmental bias has persisted. Further disagreement also emerged in the context of the transport protocol. In 1993, the Austrian *Landeshauptleutekonferenz* decided to oppose signing the protocol unless it included a provision banning the construction of new alpine transit routes. The result of this move was to delay the entire protocol development process by several years. When Austrian domestic opposition to the transport protocol was overcome, the country signed all eight completed protocols at once in 2000 and ratified them two years later.

When the Alpine Conference met for the first time in 1994, only three protocols were ready for signing. Whereas Germany, France, Italy, Monaco, Liechtenstein, and the European Community signed the mountain farming, conservation of nature and landscapes, and spatial planning and sustainable development, Austria maintained its opposition.[35] Worse, Austria argued that the unanimity requirement was violated because it did not sign; however, the interpretation that abstention did no constitute opposition won out in the end. Switzerland, due to extensive opposition by 10 of its 15 alpine cantons, also abstained from signing.

The protocol negotiations were also influenced by differences between federal Germany and Austria on the one hand, and centralized France and Italy on the other. Whereas the former sought to emphasize conservation, the latter was more interested in socioeconomic

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34 Wachter 1996.
35 France, without advance notice, signed the spatial development and sustainable development protocol only unilaterally adding a provision that excluded it from the requirement to prepare plans and programs for limiting the construction of second homes.

development. Similarly, France and Italy preferred to see the process driven by the power of established European institutions, whereas Austria and Germany favored a more voluntary approach. Finally, France and Italy felt that rapid progress, especially on the part of Germany, reflected the imposition of an Alpine vision designed by the region's German-speaking constituents.[36]

In spite of these initial difficulties, the Alpine Convention entered in force in March 1995 after three of its signatories (Austria, Liechtenstein, and Germany), presented the relevant documents of ratification, acceptance, or approval to Austria as the designated convention depository. At that time, however, only the mountain forests protocol was ready to be signed. Fundamental differences regarding the transport and soil protection protocols continued to delay their conclusion, while persistent attempts to water down provisions blocked agreement on the tourism protocol. In the case of the energy protocol, Italy had not even finalized a draft. Italy was also the last country to ratify the instrument, which entered into force there in 2000, fully nine years after the Convention was signed, and continues to voice opposition to the transport protocol.

An additional complication in the protocol development process has been the role of the European Union.[37] After assuming an active role during the early phases, EU representatives gradually removed themselves from the process, using the argument that the EU's subsidiarity principle did not warrant close EU involvement. By the mid-1990s, this hands-off approach produced widespread criticism and undermined the legitimacy of the entire convention. Together with the bottleneck then developing over the transport protocol, many wondered if the Alpine Convention was still worth pursuing. Due to the extensive substantive and institutional overlaps between the Alpine Convention and EU rule making, the European Union assumed a guarded stance, which many interpreted as tacit opposition.

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36 Norer 2003.
37 Norer 2002.

Whereas, existing national and EU laws are often stricter than the language adopted in the Alpine Convention's protocols, the EU has been careful not to preempt future regulatory venues. Yet in late 2006, the European Union signed and ratified the tourism, energy, and soil protection protocols, and signed the transport protocol, thereby signaling its support to Alpine regional cooperation.

Of the twelve functional areas outlined in the framework convention, four have yet to be formalized in protocols: population and culture, air pollution, water management, and waste management. A commitment for a population and culture protocol has existed both on the part of high level politicians and non-governmental organizations. Cipra, for instance, has considered such a protocol as an important complement to the environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development. A population and culture protocol, in Cipra's assessment, would substantially contribute to the development of a regional identity. Although the protocol's elaboration has been delayed for a number of organizational and leadership reasons, Germany initiated preparatory studies in 2000. As for the other protocols, sufficient political commitment has so far failed to materialize, in part because of issue linkages. Hence, water management is argued to be partially covered in the energy protocol, air pollution in the mountain framing and transport protocols, and waste management in the soil protection and spatial planning and sustainable development protocols.[38]

In spite of the difficulties and delays that have characterized the protocol development process, Alpine Convention signatories have managed to establish an international legal framework of unprecedented comprehensiveness. On the surface, their implementation has yet to produce significant results. However, as the final section of this paper will argue, any assessment of convention effectiveness depends on the set of criteria applied to this end.[39] In the case of the Alpine Convention, the process-based approach requires a view that takes into

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38 Streicher 2001.
39 Anreiter 1997; Wettestad 2006.

account the often indirect influence of protocol negotiations on domestic legislative developments. Even in direct terms, evidence shows that national regulations and projects have been modified to conform with the stipulations of the Alpine Convention.[40]

Current challenges

The development of an international agreement as ambitious in its substantive breadth as the Alpine Convention is bound to face significant challenges and produce disappointments. A list of concrete goals which signatories successfully excluded from framework and protocols illustrates this: ban on artificial snow machines and the use of chemical additives, ban on nuclear energy development and nuclear waste storage, ban on the release of genetically modified organisms, and binding requirements for establishing a system of zonation that clearly differentiates between different land uses. The failure to incorporate these goals into the convention is one indication of the challenges the Alpine Convention continues to face. In particular, it demonstrates the continued tension between the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainable development, and the different importance various actors attach to them. Beyond that, the main challenges faced by the Convention relate to principles of implementation and enforcement, as well as the consolidation of institutional structures.

Observers have frequently criticized the failure of the framework convention and protocols to spell out how one country can prevent another country from pursuing projects with negative transnational impacts. The question whether the Alpine Convention is really a noteworthy international agreement or largely a paper tiger has thus concerned signatories and regional stakeholders alike. It has perhaps also contributed to the dearth of scholarly work on the Alpine Convention, at least in the English language literature.[41] As many critics

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40 For Austria, see Hasslacher 2006.
41 Haßlacher 2006.

have noted, existing legislation in member states and the EU are already a good match with, and in many cases stricter than the provisions of the Alpine Convention protocols. In Switzerland, for instance, much of the ratification debate during recent years has evolved around the necessary degree of legal harmonization. While federal agencies in charge of evaluating conformity have continuously pointed out that existing laws already go much further, however, opposition to ratification has centered on more fundamental questions of national and subnational sovereignty, especially because Switzerland is not a member of the EU. At the same time, countries that have ratified the framework document and protocols are under legal obligation to harmonize national legislation, evidence for which is gradually accumulating. Yet despite of the legally binding character, detailed provisions are so far inadequate for transborder enforcement and make the work of the Compliance Committee a difficult task.

The second main challenge of the Alpine Convention concerns implementation. The sixth Alpine Conference, held in Lucerne, Switzerland, in 2000, was organized under the motto "transition to implementation." The Conference agreed on implementation guidelines and called for the development of priorities and a work program. Furthermore, the Permanent Committee was charged with establishing a working group on implementing mechanisms. Work in this respect has been slow, particularly because the recent establishment of the permanent secretariat has prevented sustained and widespread awareness raising of the Alpine Convention among signatories and their subnational stakeholders. In 2005, however, an extensive work programme for 2005-2010 was agreed. In its introduction, Austrian environment Minister Josef Pröll captures the spirit of implementation under the Alpine Convention with the following words: "The Alpine Convention and its Protocols are not about finding a standard solution for sustainable development in the alpine region; after all, there is no such thing as a standard mountain region. Instead it is about highlighting the

existing diversity of conditions and parameters, and preserving a sustainable environment."[42] The signatories have defined six priority areas for that period: (i) report on State of the Alps, monitoring and interpretation of developments; (ii) joint projects on four key issues (mobility, accessibility, transit traffic; society, culture, identity; tourism, leisure, sports; nature, agriculture and forestry, cultural landscape); (iii) fulfillment of tasks in accordance with Article 2 of the Alpine Convention (population and culture, prevention of air pollution, water management, waste management); (iv) public relations; (v) exchange of experience and co-operation; and (vi) cooperation with other mountain areas and conventions. Since 2006, signatories are required to report on the status of implementation and a comprehensive Report on the State of the Alps is to serve as a key measure of overall progress and effectiveness. Since the protocols entered into force in 2002, implementation activities have also unfolded through three networks specific to the Alpine Convention: the Alpine Network of Protected Areas, the "Alliance in the Alps" network of local authorities, and the International Scientific Committee for Alpine Research. While the Alpine Convention lacks any financial means of its own, the EU's "Alpine Space Programme" has provided significant financial input into many of the activities undertaken by these three and other networks.

Transnational regional sustainable development and earth system governance

This paper has argued that a closer look at the Alpine Convention may be of interest to theorists and practitioners concerned with earth system governance. On the scholarly side, it has suggested on the one hand that despite extensive theory building, the literature on regional international politics has so far failed to consider the implications of environmental regionalism and regionalization. On the other hand students of IEP have analyzed specific

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42 Alpine Convention Secretariat 2005.

regional environmental issues, particularly those related to water and fisheries management, but failed to produce theoretical statements about regional environmental (let alone sustainable development) cooperation that can inform earth system governance discourse and practice. The preoccupation with collective security and economic integration of the regional international politics literature, and IEP scholars' preoccupation with global environmental issues and institutions has thus generated a theoretical and empirical gap that needs to be filled in light of the growing urgency pronounced in recent assessments of the state of worldwide environmental degradation and widespread poverty.

The Alpine Convention represents an international initiative characterized by three features that may contribute to theory building and governance reform. The first of these relates to its ecoregional but comprehensive sustainable development scope, the second to its process-based approach to the framework-protocol model of international agreements, and the third to its permeability to nonstate actor influence.

The preamble of the Alpine Convention describes the region as "one of the largest continuous unspoilt natural areas in Europe, which, with their outstanding unique and diverse natural habitat, culture and history, constitute an economic, cultural, recreational and living environment in the heart of Europe, shared by numerous peoples and countries."[43] Implicit in this formulation are a number of elements that have been voiced in the regional international politics and the IEP literatures. First, the European Alps are simultaneously framed as a unique and diverse area. In line with constructivist perspectives that have noted the importance of regions as social constructions, the Alps are here defined as a region at the spatial intersection of several political ecological and sociocultural criteria. From an ecological viewpoint, the dramatic topographical and microclimatic complexity of mountain ranges set them apart from most other ecosystems. Climate change scientists have thus

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43 Alpine Convention 1991. The official Convention text as signed in Salzburg on November 7, 1991, was prepared in German, French, Italian, and Slovene. The quote is from the translation contained in the *Official Journal of the European Communities*.

recognized the importance of mountain ranges as sites of early warning for influences of global environmental change. From a political and sociocultural perspective, the Alps harbor a significant diversity in land use patterns, political systems, and cultural-linguistic histories. The Alpine region is thus both a social construction, especially in light of the sometimes politically motivated delineation of the convention's scope, and a biophysical reality.[44] Above all, widespread recognition of the *cultural* landscapes of the European Alps has warranted a frame that combines nature and society dynamics. Whereas functional approaches to regional international politics have increasingly criticized the "geography as destiny," it is clear that in some cases, geography clearly does play a role in the collective destiny of regional constituents.

Second, the juxtaposition of ecological, socioeconomic, and cultural-historic criteria implies that the goal of the Alpine Convention extends far beyond environmental protection, in spite of the fact that an environmental NGO has provided the most sustained support, and in spite of the fact that many observers and participants continue to perceive a preservationist bias. The substantive scope of the protocols demonstrates that the convention aims not simply at protecting the natural resources of the Alps, but to promote comprehensive policies geared toward the achievement of sustainable development. Moreover, the fact that three of the four remaining four protocols to be developed address more traditional areas of environmental protection – air pollution, water management, waste management – implies that signatories have found technical areas of greater importance to the local economic livelihoods – regional planning, tourism and recreation, energy, transport – more pressing concerns.

The comprehensive scope of the Alpine Convention is at once one of its strongest characteristics and one of its principal challenges. As the preceding section on protocol

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44 It is not surprising that the European Union's Interreg IIIB "Alpine Space Programme" uses a different spatial delineation of the Alps, which includes metropolitan centers such as Munich, Nürnberg, Stuttgart, Lyon, Turin, Milan and Bologna, but excludes Slovenia's alpine region. Alpine NGOs have widely criticized this territorialization and called for harmonization with the geographical scope of the Alpine Convention.

development suggested, the harmonization of protocols across divers issue areas has been a time-consuming and often politically charged process. The IEP literature has of course not been blind to the challenges of sustainable development, particularly in the context of North-South relations. Yet the single-issue focus of much of that literature has so far largely skirted the issue, albeit reflecting the development of multilateral environmental agreements.[45] As a consequence, problems relating to the intersection of and conflict between specific issue areas have given rise to analytical treatments of regime overlap conflicts, regime conflict, regime clustering, regime complexes, and other terms associated with the phenomenon. Perhaps of greatest significance has been the potential conflict between the global trade regime and environmental agreements, with the latter perceived to be vulnerable to legal challenges founded on the former.

While the Alpine Convention cannot on its own solve these potential contests, its explicit focus on convergence between environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable development has done much to help anticipate such conflicts. Correspondingly, its anticipatory nature, as opposed to the more typical "end-of-pipe" orientation of multilateral environmental treaties, is commonly held up as a advantage vis-à-vis those.[46] To inform discussions about earth system governance, scholars and practitioners would thus do well to examine more closely the experiences emerging from the Alpine Convention process.

The second feature of the Alpine Convention that may be of interest to global environmental governance reform discourse and practice is its innovative approach to the framework-protocol model. As in the case of the sustainable development scope, the initially parallel development of framework document and protocols has been both a source of strength and a significant cause of delay. Moreover, the division of labor concerning the the lead role in protocol development has generated serious differences in timing, tone, and

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45 Bruyninckx 2006
46 Anreiter 2000.

consistency, in many cases requiring tricky negotiations aimed at "backwards

harmonization."[47] As has been shown, Austrian subnational regional opposition to the

transport protocol prevented the country form signing and ratifying any of the protocols, thus

frustrating Switzerland's efforts to coordinate that protocol for many years and eventually

leading to the transfer of the coordinating mandate to Liechtenstein. Similarly, Germany's

rapid advances in the nature and landscape conservation protocol prompted France and Italy

to complain of bullying. Whereas most multilateral environmental agreements using a

framework-protocol approach do not specify the nature, or necessity for that matter, of

additional protocols, the convention's framework document defined the technical areas to be

developed. Hence, while many observers have interpreted the biodiversity convention's

Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety as a step in the wrong direction and discussions about an

adaptation protocol under the climate change convention have yet to generate results, the

Alpine Convention defined the future scope of the agreement from the start.

In addition to a degree of certainty, the process-based parallel approach to framework-

protocol development has provided signatories with the opportunity to engage in linkage

politics. The opportunity can produce both positive and negative consequences, as IEP

scholars have pointed out.[48] For instance, countries may use a variety of delaying tactics by

tying their commitment to one issue area to the satisfactory resolution in other issue areas.

This is precisely what Austria did in the case of the transport protocol. Yet, the pursuit of

cross-issue linkages can also have beneficial aspects, for instance in the association of

normative dimensions with technical aspects. The early call for a population and economy

protocol, for instance, served to create stronger linkages between most technical protocols

and local economic livelihoods and led to a considerable expansion in scope of the spatial

planning protocol. Clearly, linkage politics is a double-edged sword, yet knowledge of the

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47 Price 2000.
48 For example Raustiala & Victor 2004; Young 2002.

opportunity to use it strategically can prompt negotiators to make concessions in areas in which they have less of a stake in return for gaining favorable treatment of other proposals. The IEP literature has made substantial progress in analyzing issue linkages, but its preoccupation with single-issue environmental problems and arrangements have often led to an overemphasis of the negative consequences at the expense of positive impacts. The Alpine Convention's approach to the framework-protocol model may serve as a useful case study for generalizing positive experiences arising from issue linkage.

Finally, the Alpine Convention may serve as a model of collaboration between state and nonstate actors. The initiative for the Convention originates from the foundation of Cipra as a spin-off of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). For the first two decades of its existence, Cipra was the principal promoter of transalpine cooperation. In the 1970s, Cipra's efforts joined with the initiatives of a set of networks of subnational regions (Arge Alp, Arge Alpen-Adria, Communauté de travail des Alpes occidentales). In the late 1980s, national political leaders, and to a lesser extent EU officials assumed ownership of the Alpine Convention process, and during the 1990s, additional network of local communities and non-governmental organizations became part of a broad cross-scale and multi-actor alliance in support of sustainable development in the Alps. Cooperation between state and nonstate actors has been pervasive. Non-governmental organizations have played an instrumental role in the formal development of convention protocols, continuously pressured the European Union and signatory members to strengthen their commitments, raised awareness among local populations, implemented a staggering number of transalpine programs and projects, secured the the exchange of knowledge and experiences through regional conferences and networks, and contributed significantly to the gradual consolidation of a regional identity. This is not to say that the Alpine Convention is an unmitigated success with regard to stakeholder involvement. Indeed, the early failure to adequately involve local

populations and public officials led to persistent opposition, particularly in Switzerland. Nevertheless, the Alpine Convention has increasingly become recognized as a model of multi-actor cooperation.

　　With regard to the acknowledgment of nonstate actors, the regional international politics and the IEP literatures have both made significant progress in recent years. Indeed, heightened attention to the role of NGOs, social movements, and other nonstate actors has been a defining feature of work on IEP, distinguishing it from the state-centric nature of much of international relations theory. Yet transalpine mobilization also raises important questions relating to collective identity processes, which constructivist regional international politics have been more attuned to than IEP scholars. In many ways, the Alpine region is a multidimensional space that has had to be constructed by a variety of actors in numerous local, regional, transnational and cross-scale forums. Ultimately, this analysis is required to promote a better understanding of transnational regional sustainable development.

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