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Transition of participation modes and influence strategies of major environmental NGOs in UN Earth Summits

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Abstract:

International, large-scale conferences on environment and sustainable development has shaped the public face of the global environmental governance. United Nations led Earth Summits in Stockholm, Johannesburg or in Rio constituted hotbeds for global agreements on biodiversity, climate and sustainability goals. The demand for ensuring wide participation beyond governmental actors has grown with each global conference. Increasingly, civil society and large non-governmental actors (NGOs) are participating with greater access, resources and experience. This paper examines the influence of large environmental NGOs on key environmental conferences. It focuses on the activism of three environmental NGOs (ENGOS) – the three most influential, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and Wild Wilde Fund – on three international environmental conferences – the three biggest, namely the Stockholm Conference 1972, the Earth Summit 1992, the Earth Summit 2012. It assumes that civil society actors such as INGOs do matter. While virtually every study of international environmental issues has mentioned ENGOS as important actors in influencing government decisions to develop domestic policies and protect natural resources, the answers to the questions of how and under what conditions ENGOS can

they exert influence remain vague. Thus, the study in hand adopts a clear measurement methodology. The study measures the influence of the environmental NGOs using a measurement framework developed by Betsill and Corell (2001). The framework uses secondary data and document analysis trace policies and of activities, resources and access to conferences and thus level of influence. Further, the study compares the influence exerting strategies in context of ideology and organizational structure of the examined NGOs. It explains motivation, role and advocacy tools of NGOs working on the sustainable development and environmental protection. It also relates influence level to internal structure and influence strategies of the examined NGOs. While the ability of the global civil society to shape new environmental issues has diminished since the Earth Summit in 1992, cooperation and coalitions have become popular instruments of large environmental NGOs to influence governmental actors and achieve favorable outcomes.

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