



WHO IS INTERESTED IN DEFINING BIODIVERSITY AS A GLOBAL PHENOMENA?

CONSTANZE WEISKE
constanze.weiske@sofi.uni-goettingen.de



1. OBJECTIVE

This paper presents first part results of the PhD project «Spatial Dimensions of Biodiversity Loss». Following the research question mentioned above the empirical research aims to identify actors and actor patterns in connection with the focused dimension of biodiversity and spatial levels in order to provide a clear structure of the complex field of biodiversity politics on the international level. Therefore, the three crucial and most important documents of international environmental politics within the United Nations system in the period of 1972 to 1992 were analyzed. These are the «Action Plan on the Human Environment » of the UN-Conference 1972 in Stockholm/ Sweden, «The Brundtland Report» of the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) and the international binding agreement «Convention on Biological Diversity» (CBD), negotiated on the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) 1992 in Rio de Janeiro/ Brazil. As a framework for the evaluation of results the classification scheme of Robertson/ White (2007) was used. Thus, results according to actors, biodiversity and spatial level were assigned to the categories «interconnectedness» and «global consciousness».

2. ACTION PLAN ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT (1972)

Biodiversity: living aquatic resources, genetic resources
Space: developing countries, particularly Africa, Asia, Latin America
Goals: Utilization, data collection, access to genetic material, selective conservation of economically valuable components

INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Main actors: Governments, UN Secretary General, FAO
FAO, Governments and Sec Gen.: forests, living aquatic and genetic resources, endangered species, wild species
Governments & Sec Gen: protected areas and national parks
Sec Gen: water resources, „ecosystems of international significance“

GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS

reduced to forests, genetic resources, rivers and oceans (e.g. „global system of genetic resources; World registry of clean Rivers and Oceanic water systems“, world's forest biomass“)

3. BRUNDTLAND REPORT «OUR COMMON FUTURE» (1987)

Biodiversity: tropical moist forests, species extinction, protected areas („anticipate and prevent approach“)
Space: Central and South America, Asia, Africa
Goals: conservation, sustainable use, problem solving

INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Main actors: Governments, Industry/ Farmers, Scientists, Humankind
Governments in the global South (logging concessions) and low tariffs and trade incentives, forced timber imports to industrialized countries (deforestation) Farmers are invading protected areas/ national parks
Governments: connecting conservation with development (non-economic values)

GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS

referred to the world as a whole and the responsibility of humankind (e.g. „world communities“, „biodiversity of the planet“)

4. CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (1992)

Biodiversity: biological diversity and its components, referring to the components: genetic resources
Space: developing countries; arid, semi arid, coastal and mountainous zones, small island states
Goals: conservation, sustainable use, access to and utilization of genetic resources (ABS)

INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Main actors: contracting parties = states and regional integrated economic organizations (e.g. Nafta, Caricom)
FAO not explicitly mentioned in the vague text, but referred to Art. 24 in COP 1/ Dec. 1/5 accepted to discharge functions of the Secretary. (as well as UNESCO)
Cooperation between contracting parties dominated by financial cooperation
Cooperation referring to „emergency responses“ mentioned only once

GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS

reduced to the financial mechanism „Global Environment Facility“

5. CONCLUSION

BIODIVERSITY: genetic resources

SPACE: developing countries

ACTORS: governments and economic organizations of different spatial levels involved (FAO, Regional Integrated Economic Organizations as Contracting Parties in the CBD, Industries/ Farmers)

INTERCONNECTEDNESS: main driver of cooperation are economic interests

GLOBAL CONSCIOUSNESS: although there are two different motives for understanding biodiversity as a global phenomenon and biodiversity loss as a global problem, the global consciousness is dominated by economic interests



Reference

Robertson, R / White, KE (2007): What is Globalization? In: Ritzer, G: The Blackwell Companion to Globalization. Malden: Blackwell. p. 54-67.

Primary data sources

United Nations (1972): Action Plan on the Human Environment: <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?documentid=97> (5-11-2012)

United Nations (1992): Convention on Biological Diversity: <http://www.cbd.int/convention/text/> (2-11-2012)

World Commission on Environment and Development (1987): Our Common Future: <http://www.un-documents.net/wced-ocf.htm> (30-10-2012)