

UNFCCC negotiations (pre-Kyoto to COP-9): what the process says about the politics of CDM-sinks

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Abstract One of the most contentious issues in the negotiations aimed at operationalizing the Kyoto Protocol was the treatment of sinks and, particularly, the eligibility of sinks projects in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). This paper attempts to analyse the politics underlying these negotiations, drawing on methods of process tracing, key informant interviews, negotiating texts and secondary literature. Tracing the sinks debate and highlighting key lessons about the nature of global environmental agreements and their institutional arrangements is the first step to recounting the history of the politics of one of the major contemporary international environmental debates. The paper shows that the Kyoto Protocol negotiations on sinks and CDM-sinks were multilaterally supported as a practical solution, but went ‘off track’ due to actors’ interests and tradeoffs. As regards future negotiations on forest sinks in developing countries under the framework of the UNFCCC, the paper argues that these are likely to be influenced by similar constraints, and also by the conservation and development agenda of its supporters; as well as the experience gathered on the CDM and the interests and concerns of developing countries. We broadly frame the paper within the literature on global environmental politics.

Keywords Politics · Sinks · CDM · State actors

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