

The Guarani aquifer: A model of regional environmental cooperation?

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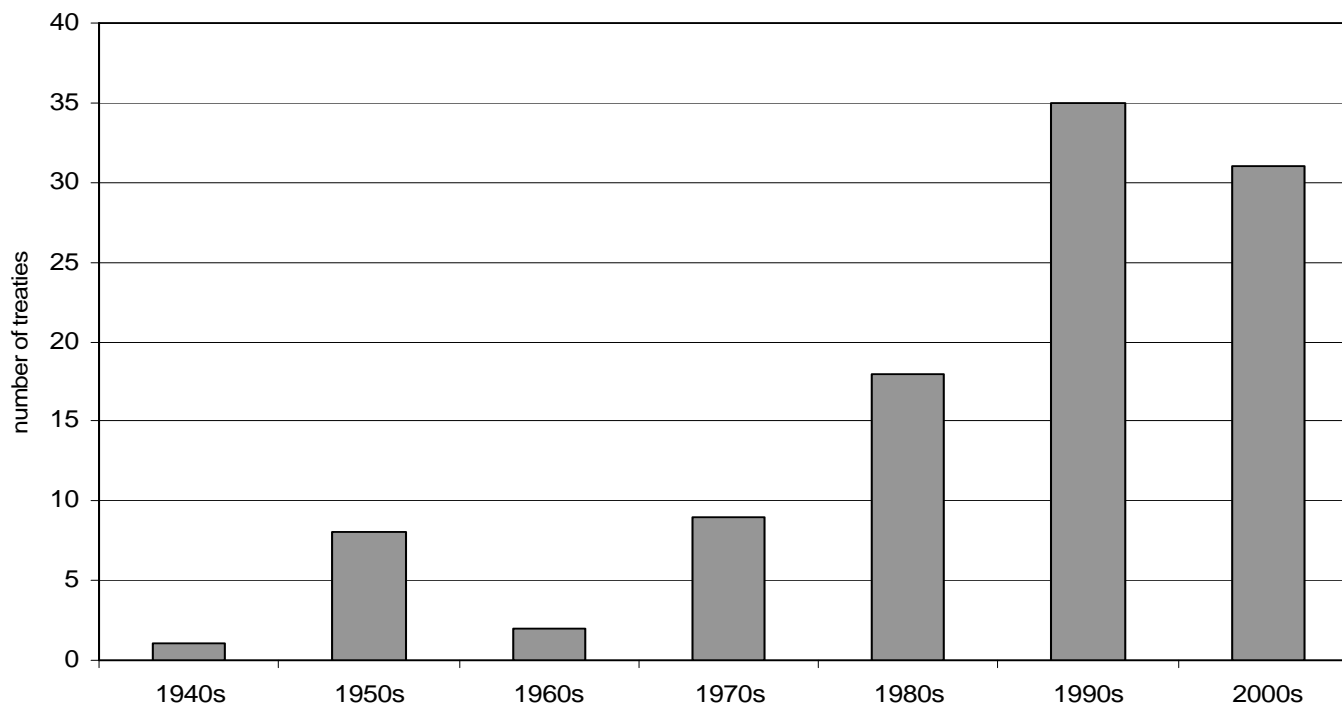
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What is regional environmental cooperation?

“collaborative efforts across national boundaries in order to address shared or transboundary ecological concerns”

Number of treaties with environmental components signed between South American countries per decade



Source: Siegel (forthcoming): developed on the basis of the Ecolex database (data extracted November 2010)

The return to democracy

- End of military dictatorships and return to democracy
- More space for civil society
- Environmental institutions created and/or strengthened
- International environmental norms gain in importance

The neoliberal reform agenda

- Embrace of the neoliberal reform agenda: focus on economic growth
 - Reform programme: cutting down on state expenditure; privatisation; FDI
 - Elite democracies – hopes of greater political participation/social reform abandoned
- > environmental concerns make it onto political agendas, but remain marginal

Neo-extractivism as a development strategy

- increases in commodity exports and resource exploitation
- high economic growth rates and social programmes based on resource revenues
- absence of other development strategies

Components of regional environmental cooperation

formal cooperation: agreements between governments

AND

cooperation in practice: regular activities involving state and/or non-state actors

Regional environmental cooperation on the Guarani aquifer

- GEF project for the Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development of the Guarani Aquifer System: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay: 2003-2009
- Guarani Aquifer Agreement: 2010

Drivers and processes of regional environmental cooperation

- Networks of researchers and scientific knowledge
- Pilot studies
- Awareness raising and construction of regional identity

Characteristics of regional environmental cooperation

- Governments focus on technical aspects and not social or political questions
- Largely in parallel to regional organisations and government-led integration processes
- Marginal(ised): high dependence on external funding and agreements often vague or non-binding

Forthcoming...

Siegel, K.M. (2017) *Regional Environmental Cooperation in South America: Processes, Drivers and Constraints*, Palgrave Macmillan, International Political Economy Series