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SLAS Postgraduate Travel Grant 2010 - Report

Research project

My research project examines to what extent countries in the Southern Cone of Latin America cooperate on environmental issues and how such cooperation takes place. In the current climate of increasing concerns regarding environmental destruction, scarcity of natural resources and climate change, there are plenty of debates, reports and newspaper articles as well as academic analyses about these issues. However, the focus has mostly been on global negotiations. Environmental cooperation on a regional level has received relatively little attention and is dominated by studies of the European Union. Yet, many environmental problems do not have global causes or consequences and it cannot be taken for granted that findings from studies on the EU are also applicable to other regions. This study therefore aims to broaden the field of regional environmental cooperation to regions outside Europe as well as analysing specific environmental issues that are relevant for the Southern Cone of Latin America.

Pilot study June-August 2010 carried out with the support of the SLAS Postgraduate Travel Grant

With the support of the SLAS Postgraduate Travel Grant I carried out a first pilot study in June-August 2010. During this time I travelled to Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Brasilia and Rio de Janeiro. I spent several weeks in each country which gave me the opportunity to speak to various people relevant for my topic, including representatives of international organisations and national ministries, NGOs and civil society organisations and researchers based in Latin America. This was crucial to gain a better understanding of the research question as well as the general context. At least in English not much research has been published on regional environmental cooperation in the Southern Cone of Latin America. Therefore it was important for me to travel to the region early on in the research project in order to speak to policy-makers, researchers and civil society organisations there and to understand which issues they think are important and what kind of material is available in Latin America.

Moreover, I was also able to establish links with Latin American research institutions, in particular FLACSO Argentina where I attended a one-day seminar. The contacts I made in that time will be very useful during the next stages of my PhD and in particular for preparing a second phase of fieldwork during the second year of my PhD where I will do more detailed interviews. In addition I gathered crucial information during the pilot study which will help me in further developing my PhD thesis. Based on this information I am now working on refining the research question and selecting case studies.

I would sincerely like to thank SLAS for their support for this pilot study and for postgraduate research in Latin America in general.