THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: A CONSTRAINED ENVIRONMENTAL LEADER?

PUBLIC LECTURE BY
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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 6, 17:20 P.M. | NADOR U. 15.
ROOM 101

ABSTRACT | The European Parliament (EP) established a reputation as an environmental champion, via its amendments to legislation and through reinforcing the global environmental leadership efforts of the European Commission. The Parliament has been beneficiary of Treaty amendments that have increased its power, most recently in the Lisbon Treaty, which extended the EP’s rights as a co-legislator to a wider range of policies and offered the EP a veto on international environmental agreements. Yet there have been a series of challenges to the EP’s scope to exercise leadership. The EU has become more heterogeneous as its membership has extended; a new far right grouping has been established in the EP; and policy-makers have had to deal with a “conglomerate of crises” (Falkner 2016) and Brexit. More generally the EU’s wider policy ambition appears to be in retreat. These conditions may act as a constraint upon the Parliament and beg the following questions: Is the EP still an environmental leader? If so what kind? How might we measure such leadership? Does it matter?

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