

Beyond Multilateralism: Global Public Policy Networks*

In recent years, the failures and insufficiencies of traditional multilateralism have become ever more obvious: Governments and international organizations alone are no longer able to address ever more complex global policy issues. The corporate sector and civil society¹ are significant players in almost all global policy domains. Their active engagement is a critical if not imperative component in delivering policy outcomes that are timely, effective and legitimate. Creative institutional innovations are needed that connect governments, international organizations, civil society, and the corporate sector in order to better address the growing number of global public policy challenges.

In this article, we argue that global public policy networks are *one* promising answer to the growing organizational vacuum at the global level. In these trisectoral networks, states, international organizations, civil society actors and the private sector are collaborating to achieve what none of the single actors is able to achieve on its own. With no early guarantee of success, many of them started as innovative »experiments« responding to an ever more complex global policy environment and in particular the inability of governmental or inter-governmental structures to manage the consequences of increased socio-economic integration and rapid technological change. Trisectoral networks are coalitions *of* and *for* change – they are both a result of a changing external environment and they help to shape it. Networks have emerged in vastly different areas ranging from the development and provision of vaccines, the construction of dams to the establishment of environmental standards.

How and why do global public policy networks develop? What makes them work? What are their capabilities and limitations? What roles do and should states and international organizations play in these networks.

This article seeks to present some preliminary answers to these broad questions. In the remainder of this article, in a *first* step we analyze the context in which global public policy networks have developed; building on existing knowledge about networks from sociology and policy analysis as well as management theories, we present some key insights for the structure and processes of trisectoral networks. *Second*, this article points to several different functions that networks perform. We will also briefly discuss some important network management issues that improve our understanding of how these networks run, what they promise, but perhaps most importantly, their limitations. In this context, the concluding section of the article will briefly discuss the role of multilateral institutions and to a limited extent that of governments in such networks. At this point we can only scratch the surface as the frontiers of knowledge on global public policy networks still need to be explored. Empirical research requires further exploration and most of the networks under consideration are too young to fully eval-

* This article presents some results of the UN Vision Project on Global Public Policy Networks. The project commissioned a series of case studies on networks from various issue areas, and analyzed the role of the United Nations in these trisectoral networks. A complete report of the research project, entitled »Critical Choices: The United Nations, networks, and the future of global governance« (hereinafter: Reinicke/Deng et al., forthcoming) will be published in spring 2000. More information on the project and the case studies can be accessed at www.globalpublicpolicy.net. We gratefully acknowledge funding by the U.N. Foundation, the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Hoechst Foundation. For further information see also Reinicke, 1999a; 1999b; 1998; 1997; Benner/Reinicke, 1999; Reinicke/Witte, forthcoming; Reinicke/Witte 1999.

1. For the purposes of this article, the term »civil society« includes NGOs, churches, the media, professional groups, as well as the public at large.

uate their performance and possible feedback effects on domestic structures as well as organizational setup and mission of multilateral institutions. One important message emerging from the empirical and analytical work so far, however, should be emphasized: the increased role of business and civil society in public policymaking does not undermine the capacity of the public sector. To the contrary: Global public policy networks enable both states and international organizations to better meet their responsibilities in a changing global environment.

A Changing External Environment

Most global public policy networks emerged during the past decade. In a number of ways, trisectoral networks reflect the underlying forces of what has been coined »globalization«, a process usually associated with massive structural change in the environment of both national and international policymakers.² Two forces stand out as driving this change. First, for almost four decades now, a general trend toward economic and political liberalization has reshaped the international system. Economic liberalization has opened markets, increased competition, and sharpened the international division of labor. For many years this development was considered uncontroversial. But during the last decade, the dismantling of economic barriers has been met with growing apprehension. Transnational economic activity has generated a variety of negative spillover effects, which governments and international organizations have so far been unable to address in a satisfactory manner.³

At the same time, many countries have been undergoing a related but often conflict-ridden process of political liberalization. The latter has led to a proliferation of organizations of civil society, and at the same time has enabled these organizations to form transnational alliances. According to the Yearbook of International Organizations, for example, the number of international non-governmental organizations increased by more than 60 percent between 1981 and 1996 (Union of International Associations, 1999).

In the developing world, international and local civil society organizations have thus estab-

lished direct relationships with Northern donors, and the greater availability of donor funds has contributed to the establishment of even more NGOs.

Meanwhile both political and economic liberalization have spurred the growth and reach of transnational corporations, which today account for a substantial share of economic activity in many countries. According to the UN's 1999 World Investment Report, in 1998 60,000 transnational companies controlled approximately 600,000 affiliated organizations. Sales of these companies amounted to US\$ 9.5 trillion in 1998, clearly outstripping the total amount of world trade. Similar to international NGOs, a substantial part of transnational corporations are heavily dominated by Northern countries. Indeed, 90% of TNC headquarters are located in the developed world (UNCTAD 1999). Although the political significance of transnational companies and their activities is still highly disputed, there can be no doubt that they play a very important role in economic development and have become key political players on the global stage. The changes wrought by economic and political liberalization have been sweeping. Yet even they have been superseded by the second force now reshaping the environment for states and international organizations. That force is the technological revolution, which already has brought lasting and profound changes to the world in which we live. Technological change transforms the way in which information and knowledge are created, processed and disseminated. While it is now commonly acknowledged that it has already transformed the corporate sector, it is now also beginning to change the way the public sector is doing business. Managing this flow of information constitutes the key challenge that public institutions face nowadays. Although technological advances may actually to some degree strengthen public institutions, their rapidity has

2. There can be no doubt that »globalization« is a highly problematic term as such. Most of the economic processes associated with globalization are not really global but very much confined to the OECD-world (see for example Hirst/Thompson 1999). For a more detailed description and analysis of globalization see Reinicke, 1998.

3. See for a more detailed debate about possible negative effects of economic liberalization Ruggie, 1994, and Rodrik, 1997. For a critical perspective see Garrett, 1998.

clearly outstripped governments' ability to structure and make adequate use of them. Technological change has also made social, cultural and economic relations more intertwined and more complex, and inherently more difficult to predict or stabilize. The financial crisis that recently erupted in Asia, and the debate about the appropriate social response to scientific advances in the genetic modification of organisms, are two disparate but dramatic illustrations of what policymakers are up against.

It seems almost self-evident that deeper social and economic integration and the associated emergence of a global market, coupled with the revolution in technology, require that a growing number of »public goods« be provided at the global level (see Kaul et al. 1999). It is less clear, though, whether the right structures and institutions to facilitate such a process now exist at the global level. After all, what is and what is not in the public interest is something that is difficult to determine a priori. Rather, it is the outcome of the public policymaking process, which in any system governed by democratic principles must be participatory and transparent and reflect the view of the majority of those affected.

The twin forces of political and economic liberalization and technological change thus present both challenges and opportunities to the current architecture of global governance.⁴ The geographic reach and accelerated pace of economic and social activity, the growing recognition of the daunting complexity of many public policy issues and the acknowledgment that many issues must embrace a perspective on intergenerational equity – all these have created what one might call an *operational gap*, as policymakers and institutions often simply lack the information, knowledge and tools to respond. In addition, political liberalization and technological change have opened a *participatory gap*, as individuals and private organizations increasingly perceive themselves as excluded from policy decision-making in their supposedly democratic institutions.⁵ Some of the same developments that pose such daunting challenges to traditional governance mechanisms also offer the potential to help bridge both the operational and the participatory gap characterized above. For example, the technological developments that make rapid information exchange pos-

sible enable the kind of decentralized, non-hierarchical network structure needed to respond quickly and flexibly to a rapidly changing environment. With a mobilized global citizenry, monitoring can take place in a less centralized, more participatory manner, and increasing political liberalization allows the monitors to become active on a transnational level. The trisectoral networks presented in the next sections are excellent examples of institutional innovations that make use of those possibilities and that have proved to be one workable tool for public policymakers in their attempt to account for the challenges they face.

Trisectoral Networks: A Silent Revolution?

Trisectoral networks create bridges on a transnational scale among the public sector (national, regional or state, and local governments as well as inter-governmental groups), the private sector and civil society. They (a) reflect the changing roles and relative importance among them; (b) pull diverse groups and resources together; and (c) address issues that no group can resolve by itself.⁶

4. For an early argument related to global governance see Rosenau/Czempiel, 1992. There is no widely accepted definition of global governance, but the statement of the Commission on Global Governance describes global governance as »[...]the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs. It is a continuing process through which conflict or diverse interests may be accommodated and co-operative action may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements that people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interests.« (Commission on Global Governance, 1995: 5). James N. Rosenau adopts an even wider definition: »[...] global governance is conceived to include system of rules at all levels of human activity – from the family to the international organization – in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions.« (Rosenau, 1995: 13). Usually, however, the existing architecture of global governance is understood as the sum of international organizations and regimes as the constituting elements.

5. For a more detailed discussion of the »democratic deficit« in international politics see for example Dahl, 1994; Held, 1995/1997 and Habermas, 1998.

6. See also for more detailed and very informative studies on networks Waddell, 1998; 1999.

Global public policy networks are not just another institution. What gives them their distinctive flavor is their ability to bring actors from diverse backgrounds together – actors that before often had been working against each other. It is often the first time that corporate executives, local NGO heads and government officials have attempted to work together in order to achieve their respective aims. Through the »strength of weak ties« (Granovetter, 1973) networks can handle this diversity of actors precisely because of the productive tensions on which they rest.

In fact, the ability of networks to innovate and produce sustainable results depends on the talent of network managers to keep the ties between actors loose but still close enough to be manageable – as one observer described it, networks are exercises in structured informality (Prewitt, 1998). »Collaboration« rather than »cooperation« might therefore be the more appropriate term to describe the relationships and processes within a network. »Cooperation« may result in cognitive blockades as a result of social cohesion as well as thinking and acting in networks might become strongly path-dependent and structurally conservative. A network loses much of its comparative advantage to a conventional hierarchy when it institutionalizes and degenerates into just another organization. The major strength of networks is therefore diversity, not uniformity. According to some analysts, horizontal governance systems can help solve complex problems through a variety of venues (for a more detailed analysis see Messner, 1997). They can pool know-how, provide a space in which experiences can be exchanged (providing a space for learning), facilitate negotiations that may lead to consensus or compromises through increased transparency and, finally, result in a re-construction of interests among actors through the process of social interaction. It is important to understand that global public policy networks are not just another attempt at organization building, but that they are dynamic in both process and structure.

In addition, networks do not merely aggregate resources, but are structured to take advantage of the fact that each participating sector brings different resources to the fore. A typical network (if there is such a thing) combines the voluntary energy and legitimacy of the civil society sector with the financial muscle and interest of businesses

and the enforcement and rule-making power and coordination and capacity-building skills of states and international organizations. Collaboration in networks creates regularity and predictability in the participants' relationships, generating a viable institutional framework for fruitful cooperation. By spanning socioeconomic, political and cultural gaps, networks manage relationships that might otherwise degenerate into counterproductive confrontation, something we have seen too often in recent years with the growing presence of both business and civil society in the global policy arena.

Global public policy networks not only combine existing knowledge from different sources and backgrounds but also create new knowledge, as consensus emerges over often contentious issues. This takes knowledge management of a sort that lies beyond the traditional meaning of that term. Relying on differences in knowledge and in opportunities for knowledge gathering among their stakeholders, global public policy networks apply an open sourcing model already applied in the private sector, and manage knowledge from the bottom up. This model of managing knowledge is far from perfect, but it is a considerable improvement given that it involves all stakeholders. An added feature of this form of knowledge management is that it ensures constant learning – from both successes and failures. Global public policy networks are, in one important dimension, learning organizations, built on the diversity of their participants. Learning in the context of diversity takes advantage of the »strength of weak ties,« making use of the knowledge and experience of participants from different social, cultural and political backgrounds. These characteristics provide a fertile ground in which sustainable and legitimate solutions can be agreed upon.

As will be shown, participation of actors from the various sectors in global public policy networks usually varies along the policy cycle. For example, the participation of all major actors (governments, international organizations, the business sector and civil society) may be indispensable at certain stages of the policy cycle – such as negotiation and implementation – depending on the potential for conflict involved. On the other hand, at least from a purely analytical perspective, the initial setting of agendas would not necessarily require multisector participation, and the empirical evidence confirms this.

Trisectoral Networks in Practice: Capabilities and Limits

Many of the initiatives currently operating are relatively young, and the enormous variety of networks suggests that no consistent pattern of network building under specific circumstances and conditions has yet emerged.⁷ Yet, it is possible to highlight the different functions networks perform even though no simple typology can do justice to the full range of network activities. Most of the networks perform several of these activities, but every network does not necessarily perform all, or even most, of them.

First, global public policy networks get involved in *placing new issues on the global agenda*, or raising the prominence of issues that have been neglected. All such networks do this in some degree, but one type of network – what has been called transnational advocacy networks (see Keck/Sikkink, 1998; Spiro, 1995;) – makes raising global consciousness its primary objective. Advocacy networks generally form between civil society groups and individual states to lobby intergovernmental organizations, other states, and the business sector to adopt certain measures. They typically articulate clear and focused goals for their activities and frame their chosen issue in a way that will have maximum impact, often by couching it in the language of a moral imperative. They use a variety of methods to mobilize actors to bring important issues to the forefront of the global policymaking agenda. The strategic use of the media and the involvement of influential individuals have been important features of such efforts. Global public policy networks create a transnational public discourse around policy issues that require a global approach. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines is a model of a global network that concentrated on a single issue and waged a successful media campaign to raise awareness of the problem and move to its resolution (Price, 1998). Further examples include the international debt relief movement, led by Jubilee 2000, as well as Transparency International and the Rugmark movement.

Besides making use of the media and getting influential individuals involved, a second lesson that can be discerned from most cases is that advocacy networks can increase the prominence of

issues that are already on the global agenda by articulating clear and focused goals, often justifying them on incontrovertible moral grounds. In many cases, networks concentrate their attention on narrow issues within a broader policy domain to avoid prohibitive opposition. Instead, the choice of a specific focus often attracts considerable support, as the example of the efforts of the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers shows. The emphasis on normative arguments against the use of child soldiers strengthens the network, in part by depicting opponents' positions as morally indefensible.

In many cases, networks that perform functions other than advocacy start in a similar fashion, that is, by placing issues prominently on the global agenda, before moving on to the other phases of the policy cycle. The transnational linkages formed during the advocacy process will likely assist these networks as they move toward implementing policy solutions. More and more advocacy networks have realized that to move beyond mere advocacy, they must reach out to and collaborate with other sectors such as the business community.

A second function of global networks is *facilitating the negotiation and settlement of global standards*. This is happening in areas as diverse as financial regulation and environmental management. Whereas agenda setting can often be accomplished by only a few dedicated individuals the complexity of negotiating and setting standards, as well as the concerns of fairness and equity, typically requires the involvement of stakeholders from all sectors on a representative basis. Most importantly, trisectoral networks can help to overcome stalemate in highly conflict-ridden policy arenas. The World Commission on Dams (WCD) is a prototypical example. The network was designed to respond to the operational and participatory

7. Of course, this article can only cover anecdotal evidence from the in-depth case studies that were commissioned by the UN Vision Project on Global Public Policy Networks. For reasons of space, some cases have been omitted altogether. More information on the cases mentioned in this brief survey as well as many others covered in the full report of the project (Reinicke/Deng et al., forthcoming) can be accessed at www.global-publicpolicy.net. Some of the case studies are available in full-text online.

governance challenge of generating the institutional arrangements and decision-making processes to facilitate sustainable dam construction. In its work, it has managed to overcome the gridlock among development planners, contracting firms, and environmental groups involved in the construction of large dams.⁸ It shows what can be accomplished with a truly trisectoral structure in terms of both membership and funding. Through case studies, a review process, and various consultations, the commission aims to assist future decision-making about the planning, designing, monitoring, and operation of large dams.

Some important lessons can be learned from this particular case.

- ▶ First, establishing a basic measure of trust among actors in a conflict-ridden environment is time-consuming and costly, but launching a sustainable mechanism for consensus building and standard setting requires no less effort. In such a highly contentious policy domain, the exclusion of any important stakeholder from the process could endanger the entire negotiation process.
- ▶ Second, the case of the WCD also shows that a truly trisectoral sourcing of knowledge is a key factor for building consensual knowledge and closing the operational and participatory governance gaps. Inclusiveness, openness and transparency are the key principles of the WCD; its structure, process and funding are all trisectoral in nature.
- ▶ Third, the time constraints governing the commission's work is an important precondition for the success of the WCD to date. The participants made a commitment that the work program of the WCD would be completed within the specified period, after which the commission will cease to exist. Setting a time limit on the commission's activities ensures that the results will be useful to various stakeholders because of their timeliness, and guarantees that the WCD will not degenerate into just another talking shop unable to admit to its growing irrelevance.

In sum, it is very obvious that in contentious policy domains, a participatory and inclusive approach, using open sourcing to pool knowledge, is imperative for producing effective and politically sustainable results. A classic case of underinvestment in such a process is the Multilateral Agree-

ment on Investment (MAI). NGOs felt left out of the process, and the business sector was not sufficiently interested or motivated to participate. After the initial criticism of the secretive and exclusionary manner of the negotiation process, the OECD reacted too little and too late. As opposition to the treaty grew, every prospect for reconciliation and cooperation between the OECD and civil society organizations was shattered, thanks to tone-deaf public officials and overly radical NGOs.

In addition, successful standard setting does not end with agreement on a norm. Rather, it must proceed to implementation and compliance, which in turn require ownership of the process by those with a stake in the outcome, possibly triggering new stages of conflict, with which the network must then come to terms.

A third function of networks is to *gather and disseminate knowledge*. Some global public policy networks make this their principal activity. An example would be the Roll Back Malaria Initiative (RBM)⁹ launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR). The information technology revolution allows all kinds of knowledge, technical and nontechnical, to be shared without regard for distance or borders and at ever lower costs. Networks that focus on this kind of activity tend to be especially successful when they link participants with access to different knowledge bases, and when all participants are willing to rethink their own ideas and practices. Being one of the oldest global networks, the CGIAR has contributed enormously to the discovery and worldwide propagation of new crop strains and farming techniques. Yet this well established network has shown the flexibility to expand its purview to issues of sustainable production systems, and has adopted a strong poverty focus. It has also created new institutional forms to increase the participation of stakeholders from all three sectors and to respond to other challenges.

8. For more information on the work of the World Commission on Dams see the initiative's website at www.dams.org.

9. For more on the Roll Back Malaria Initiative see <http://www.globalpublicpolicy.net/RollBackMalaria.htm> as well as the website of the WHO on RBM at <http://www.who.int/rbm/about.html>.

In another case, by bringing together the available knowledge from all three sectors, RBM hopes to increase efficiency and efficacy and avoid duplication in the international efforts to control malaria. RBM shows that making full use of the differing comparative advantages of network participants is crucial for networks engaged in coordinating research activities. In the past, reliance on this principle had been limited by the lack of inter-agency communication among the U.N. agencies involved in the fight against Malaria. As a result, this has led agencies to take on tasks in which they had no particular advantage, or to tasks simply not being undertaken at all. The reapplication and strengthening of this principle, the switch to sector-wide approaches and the renewed requirement for communication across organizations and sectors, will require a lot of learning and a change in organizational cultures. This will not be easy, and it will take time. If RBM becomes a success, it will be because the process has been fueled from the bottom up and from the operational side, by making use of the principle of open sourcing. Only on the operational side of such an endeavor are people meeting and working together creatively to solve problems and building trust, that in turn will lead to a tighter-knit community of researchers committed to the conquest of malaria.

Fourth, global public policy networks may also have a commercial dimension, *making new markets* where they are lacking, and *deepening markets* that are failing to fulfill their potential. Left to their own devices, markets sometimes fail to produce certain goods, such as public goods, that society demands. Global public policy networks can help bridge this gap between demand and supply. The Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV), for example, is a global network that seeks to improve the economic incentives for pharmaceutical companies to develop badly needed new antimalarial vaccines. With the MMV, a new NGO has been created in which industry and civil society can collaborate to ensure adequate funding for research. Contributors to the MMV include, among others, the Global Forum for Health Research, the Rockefeller Foundation, SmithKline Beecham and Wellcome Trust, the U.K. Department for International Development, the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associates, and

the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industries, as well as the World Bank. Research and development are funded primarily by the public sector and private foundations, thus creating a more predictable business environment for the pharmaceutical companies that have committed themselves to provide expertise and resources. However, any vaccine discoveries will be patented, and the owner of those patents will be the MMV. In turn, pharmaceutical companies will be allowed to market the products to low-income populations at affordable prices. A royalty income may go to the MMV on those products that earn significant returns for the organization's commercial partners. These returns will be fed back into the MMV's funds to diminish the need for future donations. Through the new initiative, the private and the public sectors aim to bring together the best of each other's strengths. By creating a market mechanism for the distribution of vaccines, the MMV contributes to RBM's ambitious goal of halving the global malaria burden by 2010. In addition, the MMV initiative highlights the fact that governments that finance global public policy networks do not engage in foreign aid but in investment (in this case in the global health infrastructure), the returns of which are shared by all, South and North.

Networks are also helping a host of micro-lending enterprises in developing countries to improve and expand their operations, by providing links to other sources – both of finance and of information – about best practice.¹⁰ Micro-lending, the extension of small loans to poor individuals and small businesses, is regarded as one of the most effective tools yet invented for combating poverty. Micro-lending networks bring together NGOs, the public sector (donor agencies and international organizations), and commercial banks to support such financing. In most cases, individual micro-credit enterprises are sustained through close links among a variety of actors, including states, central banks, commercial banks, local NGOs and foundations. In addition, although individual micro-lending initiatives are basically oriented toward the provision of credit, they do more than deliver a

10. See for more on microlending networks the case study summary at <http://www.globalpublicpolicy.net/microlending.htm>

financial service by generating sociopolitical outcomes (i.e., the empowerment of women), strengthening self-governance capacities at the local level (through the financing of educational programs and in some cases the delivery of health care), and empowering the poor.

Fifth, some global public policy networks are designed specifically as *innovative implementation mechanisms* to see through traditional intergovernmental treaties. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) has increasingly turned to trisectoral networking to achieve its mission, that of funding and implementing worthy projects in the area of environmental protection. Founded in 1991, the GEF is a hybrid organization, combining a conventional intergovernmental approach with an important network dimension. Widespread dissatisfaction among developing countries and criticism by NGOs led to a restructuring of its governance structure resulting from two new conventions.¹¹ That restructuring acknowledged a greater role for NGOs, creating a system of regional focal points to gather their input on the GEF and its council meetings and to disseminate related information on those meetings. In addition, the restructured GEF specifically identified NGOs and business entities, along with donors and governments, as eligible to prepare and execute GEF projects.

Much of what networks accomplish through the five functions just outlined can be thought of in some sense as products – sounder standards, better information and more complete markets. But networks also contribute to improving the process by which all these products and others come into being, and in so doing they help in closing the participatory gap. The intangible outcomes of networks, such as greater trust among participants and the creation of a forum for raising and discussing other new issues, are often as important as the tangible ones, and may endure even longer. Transparency International (TI), for example, has not only scored significant successes in the fight against official corruption but has also built coalitions of trust among very different actors in this sensitive area.¹² Corruption was widely regarded, at least until the mid-1990s, as a topic that was »too hot to handle.« States as well as international organizations either studiously ignored its existence or neglected to take the necessary steps to counter it. In fact, some

countries, developed and developing alike, provided (and in many cases still provide) incentives for corruption by offering tax breaks to their corporations that bribe foreign officials.

It was TI that successfully placed the issue of corruption on the global agenda and on the agendas of many individual countries as well. It was also able to forge national and trisectoral coalitions to work against corruption – a process that presupposes a substantial amount of trust among the various participants. It serves an important bridging function to bring unlikely parties to the table. It chose a nonadversarial strategy that eschewed investigation and exposure of corrupt practices and instead focused on cooperation, encouragement, consultation, education and personal influence. Excellent expertise, combined with the high credibility of its leadership, has contributed to the emergence of relationships based on trust among TI itself, businesses, states and international organizations.

As a result, intangible outcomes should not be overlooked when measuring the performance of networks and evaluating their outputs. They are critical to sustaining globalization for they ensure that a growing number of public policy decisions are embedded in frameworks in which the most basic elements of participatory governance are present. These functions of global public policy networks deserve more attention, because »getting the process right« is of crucial importance for the ultimate success of public policymaking.

Network management

This description of global public policy networks may have given the impression that networks sprout and grow almost naturally when the need for them arises and the circumstances are propitious. And sometimes, in a sense, they do. As was already mentioned above, networks are nothing if not situational and opportunistic. Yet that does not mean that they do not need careful cultivation

11. The 1992 Framework Convention on Climate Change and the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity.

12. For more information on Transparency International see the organization's website at www.transparency.org.

and nurturing. Managing a network requires skillful social entrepreneurship, flexibility and imagination and the ability to learn on the go.

Perhaps most importantly, the empirical cases surveyed for this analysis show that those who would presume to manage a network must first understand that it is seldom they, the managers, who will develop the solution to the problem that the network was formed to address. More often it is the stakeholders themselves who find the answers. But network managers play several critical roles, including that of managing the tensions and conflicts that inevitably arise from a committed search among disparate parties for solutions to real problems, and of doing so in a way that keeps the participants engaged. The paragraphs below provide a list of the most basic functions that will appear on a network manager's job description.

The first task, of course, is *getting the network up and running*. Often it is the vision, dynamism and resolve of one or a few individuals – like Kadar Asmal in the case of the World Commission on Dams – that provide the spark for a new network. In other cases the needed leadership is institutional: an example is the World Health Organization's role in launching Roll Back Malaria. Would-be founders of a network must concentrate on getting the network dynamics right from the start, which means getting the right people on board and creating a common, shared vision. They must also make sure that participants realize their dependence on each other and on innovative collective thinking to solve the problem at hand. The leaders must take pains not to allow the network to become too closely tied to themselves or another individual or institution; rather they must be willing, even eager, to share power and to »lead from behind.«

A second challenge is *balancing adequate consultation with delivery* on the network's objectives – or in other words, getting the process right while getting the product out. It is important to allow for extensive consultation and discussion, especially in the start-up phase, and especially when the participants have heretofore been adversaries or competitors. This gives legitimacy to the network process – but it also risks delay in achieving the results that the participants and their constituencies demand. Networks can help keep their efforts on the rails by setting »milestones« against which

to measure their progress. They can also sometimes engineer »easy wins« that help to satisfy their constituencies while allowing longer-incubating work to proceed.

All networks, even the most ad hoc and ephemeral, absorb resources, and these resources cost money. Therefore *ensuring adequate funding* for the network's activities is an inescapable task for network managers. Also, the manner in which funding is obtained is vital for the network's credibility and sustainability. Often support needs to be trisectoral in nature rather than come from a single donor or sector although this is less important for some networks, such as those whose primary purpose is implementation. For example, in the case of the World Commission on Dams it was absolutely crucial that funding for the initiative came from all three sectors in order to sustain its legitimacy. Until now, trisectoral funding plays a less important role for the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, something that may change in the future as the initiative deals with much more contentious issues such as genetically modified food stuffs.

As was indicated above, networks must avoid falling into the trap of becoming just another institution, with an established bureaucracy and a rigid hierarchy. Network managers must therefore focus on *maintaining »structured informality«* – by keeping relationships loose and unconfining while at the same time building in enough organization and framework to get things done. One way to dodge the institutional trap is to build the network on existing institutions, keeping the network's own secretariat to a minimum. Built-in review processes, internal and external, can also help prevent ossification of the network's structures, practices, and people.

A useful strategy in fostering networks and their goals is to *look actively for possible alliances across sectors*. Sectors, after all, are not monolithic, and sometimes intrasectoral divides create opportunities for innovative *intersectoral* networking, where people and institutions in different sectors can find common ground. Take for example Greenpeace's initiative in the case of the Framework Convention on Climate Change. Greenpeace was able to fundamentally change the playing field in this policy domain by engaging private insurance companies and motivating them to take a

stance on global warming. For Greenpeace, seeking allies in the business community was important, because the group needed their expertise to speak more authoritatively on the risks of global warming, thereby making use of independent analysis of the potential costs of climate change. Some major insurance companies, in turn, had already come to understand the danger that climate change posed for their business. Soon a number of the largest insurance companies started to take a public profile on the issue, calling for governments to take »urgent and dramatic measures.« Although it might not have had more than a catalytic effect, there is no doubt that Greenpeace's strategy of seeking unlikely allies from different sectors helped to spur a slow negotiation process and build a broader coalition for change. By bringing in the insurance industry, Greenpeace was able to tip the balance of power within the negotiations by exploiting intrasectoral differences between the fossil fuels industry and the insurance industry.

Even in a world where political liberalization and technological change have made it far easier than before for people to connect, inclusion of all interested parties in a network's activities remains difficult. Much of a network manager's efforts relate to *meeting the dual challenge of inclusion* – of bringing local interested parties into the global dialogue, and of bringing stakeholders in developing countries into a process that tends to be dominated by industrial-country elites. But inclusion is crucial to a network's legitimacy and accountability, as well as important on a normative basis. It is also a practical imperative: networks often need local people and institutions to implement their decisions on the ground.

Networks have pursued various strategies to achieve greater inclusion. They can define and pursue multiple levels of engagement, for example by establishing organizations at the national level whose deliberations feed into the global network. They can establish structures that institutionalize inclusion, such as representative voting arrangements and innovative funding mechanisms. They can build on existing initiatives and approaches, working from the bottom up. Or they can do the opposite, adapting global policies to fit local realities. Finally, networks can help build up the limited financial and organizational capacity of those local and developing-country actors whose inclusion

they seek, by providing access to information technology, by providing expertise, or directly by providing funding.

In sum, this tour de force through some of the most important management aspects of trisectoral networks makes one thing very clear: Building and sustaining networks and generating sustainable policy results is all but an easy ride. In fact, this approach toward global public policymaking may seem overly costly and time-intensive to some, especially compared to the traditional hierarchical governance structures that have been built up over the last decades. While this analysis by no means implies that these hierarchically organized institutions are now completely ineffective and void, it does show that for many of the pressing policy issues we face today, they are not able to come up with appropriate and sustainable solutions. Networks are of course not a panacea. But if rightly managed they can be a very effective tool in the arsenal of policymakers. International organizations and governments play a crucial role in these networks and can significantly contribute to their success. The concluding section will lay out some of the most important functions public sector institutions can and indeed should play in order to address the current shortcomings of global public policy networks.

Conclusion

Considering the degree of economic and political liberalization and the ongoing rapid technological change (propelled for example by the internet), it is difficult to imagine how we could ever return to the status quo ante, short of a major economic, political, or social crisis. Indeed, as this article has shown, corporate actors and civil society have adapted and continue to adapt to these new and still changing circumstances. But learning to operate in such a highly dynamic environment, and to cope with the many pressures it generates, has turned out to be a bigger challenge than many would have predicted in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. For public institutions in particular, both on the state and multilateral level, learning processes often seem to proceed only at a painstakingly slow pace. Interacting with the private sector and NGOs in global public policy net-

works is one of the challenges public institutions increasingly face. While the role of states and international organizations in trisectoral networks cannot be sufficiently explored here, the following brief concluding remarks should give an idea of what kind of issues are involved.

As most of the cases surveyed for this article make abundantly clear, both states and international organizations are already active players in networks. Indeed, the leadership of the U.N. as well as the World Bank have recently pledged to make partnerships and »coalitions for change« their principle prime strategies for the years to come.¹³ Bilateral development aid agencies, such as the German GTZ or Swedish SIDA, have also been involved in numerous networks. From the World Commission on Dams, to the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research to the Roll Back Malaria Initiative: Governments and international organizations are prominent and sometimes central players in these networks.

Nevertheless, involvement of international organizations in global public policymaking remains scattered and has not been the result of an overall comprehensive strategic choice. There is no move to be selective and prioritize, no rigorous mechanisms to determine their appropriate role in various networks and the kind of internal restructuring and adjustment this change in strategy would require. Developing such a strategic vision is important but has not been subject to much debate. On the basis of our case studies, some preliminary and far from comprehensive observations can be made on which further research and strategy development should focus.

There can be no doubt that many, if not the overwhelming majority, of global public policy networks will depend on public support. In this sense, governments and international organizations should not take those networks as an excuse to divert funding from important policy fields. Rather, they should see their own participation and that of international organizations in trisectoral networks as long-term investments that will ultimately help them to better meet their responsibilities. For both states and international organizations, engaging in global public policy networks presents them with an opportunity to promote change within their own ranks. Defining their comparative advantage should be the bottom

line of both states and international organizations when determining their strategic involvement in trisectoral networks.

While government agencies are »natural« participants in networks both as sponsors and implementers, international organizations have the special task of mediating at a global level between states, business and civil society actors. Far from being comprehensive, it is possible to distill six major roles international organizations do and/or should play in trisectoral networks.

- ▶ First, international organizations sometimes act as *convenors* in order to bring all the parties to the table, mobilizing key constituencies and providing a forum to exchange views. U.N. agencies in particular have acted as convenors, successfully making use of their credibility across different sectors.
- ▶ Second, international organizations have proved to be able to provide a *platform and »safe space«* for people and institutions coming together in a network, by establishing a level playing field for negotiations. In highly contentious policy domains, providing such a haven and bringing together outside parties may also have a catalytic effect on negotiations.
- ▶ Third, one of the clear lessons learned from the empirical work that has been done on trisectoral networks is that social entrepreneurship is of crucial importance for the setup of a network. While there is no reason to believe that such leadership must necessarily emerge from the public sector, *political high-profile leadership* on the side of international organizations in the initiation phase has in some cases proven to be decisive.

13. In his 1999 address to the Annual Meetings of the World Economic Forum, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan observed that: »The United Nations once dealt only with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society.« In similar fashion, James D. Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, has argued in last speech of the World Bank-IMF Annual Meetings that a new international development architecture has to embrace the principles of coalition-building to bring together the public sector, corporate actors, and civil society.

- ▶ Fourth, international organizations do at times act as *norm entrepreneurs* by using networks as platforms to advance norms in such areas as sustainable human development or human rights.
- ▶ Fifth, international organizations do also serve as *multilevel network managers*. With the dual trends of greater devolution of authority through decentralization and the strengthening of supranational forms of governance, the challenge for international organizations is to develop strategies for simultaneously interacting with the appropriate levels of governance on particular issues at appropriate stages of the public policy cycle. By serving as a hub, international organizations can facilitate the crucial local-global link in global public policymaking.
- ▶ Sixth, although being a difficult role to play in times of stagnating public budgets, international organizations do in fact act as *financiers*, providing resources for a range of operational programs related to the implementation of global public policies.

In some cases, the involvement of international organizations in trisectoral networks has been comparatively successful, nurturing trisectoral cooperation and ultimately making use of it, as the initiating role of the World Bank in the World Commission on Dams demonstrates. In this case, the World Bank (in cooperation with the World Conservation Union (IUCN)) acted as convenors, bringing all stakeholders to the table. In addition, the Bank and IUCN provided seed money and thereby acted as one of the main drivers in the early stages of the WCD, only to withdraw from their central role later in order not to predetermine outcomes and allow for an independent consultation process to develop. However, we can by no means take for granted that international organizations are actually able to »walk their talk« and successfully perform these roles in global public policy networks.

It goes without saying that increased involvement of multilateral institutions – especially the U.N. and its specialized agencies that stand at the heart of the existing multilateral structure – requires bold steps in changing the organizational structures and cultures of these institutions. Equally, if not more importantly, it requires a fundamental change on the side of the stake-

holders in these organizations, the member states. Many scholars and policymakers seem to think that the rise of transnational non-state actors undermines state capacity and the effectiveness of their international organizations in fulfilling their mandate and mission. This article has made clear, though, that in contrast they represent a unique opportunity for governments to regain the initiative in the debate over the future of global governance. It is crucial for states to understand that global public policy networks are not meant to replace governments but to complement them. Empowering those that constitute the real basis of legitimate and accountable global governance and providing a framework for their ideas and interest to be translated into concrete decisions and solutions no longer amounts to a zero-sum game or a »power shift« (Mathews, 1997). Rather it provides an opportunity to strengthen those institutions that are charged with the execution of policy. Networks enable governments to better manage the risks and take advantage of the opportunities that economic liberalization and technological change bring, making governments more responsive to their constituents. Global public policy networks are by definition volatile constructions that require much attention and careful management. That is why global public policy networks do not offer an easy ride, but the difficulties are well worth the risk, given the daunting challenges of a complex world with an ever-expanding multiplicity of actors, interests and issues to be resolved. They represent a promising medium through which states and their international organizations can achieve their mission, maintain their competence in a changing global environment and serve their citizens in a more effective and legitimate way. This also emphasizes that states and international organizations will indeed play significant roles in the future – they are not up for grabs. However, they do face a new environment that requires adjustment on their part.

From a policy perspective, it is important to recognize that international organizations can no longer afford to merely react to a changing external environment. Such a posture may prove to have disastrous effects as a powerful backlash against unmanaged globalization has become a reality. Intergovernmental institutions, as such, are of course limited in their ability to embark on

such an ambitious reform agenda. Ultimately, it is up to their shareholders, the member countries, that must take the lead in proposing a public policy architecture that can respond to the demands of globalization and embrace the vision of global public policy networks. ◀

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