

The Emergence of Transnational Public Policy Partnerships: The Case of WSSD Partnerships

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Introduction

The fact that the partnership model becomes more prominent in global politics and sustainable development in particular goes without much challenge. However the question how such transnational public policy partnerships emerge at the global stage has yet to be answered.

Various theories seek rational explanations for the emergence of global sustainability partnerships. While these theories are popular in the field of international relations they have rarely been tested for transnational public policy partnerships. Moreover, other, 'non-rationalist explanations cannot be excluded; this paper will therefore also discuss institutionalist theories, and critical theories as possible explanatory frameworks.

The second part of this paper examines the *patterns* of emergence of transnational public policy partnerships. The theories discussed have specific implications for the geographic, policy area and

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participatory patterns of emergence. Discrepancies between the theoretical discussion of the emergence of partnerships and patterns of emergence raise the question whether current theories sufficiently provide with an analytical framework for the appraisal of partnerships.

Part 1: Why do Partnerships Emerge? Theoretical Perspectives

Rationalism

Admittedly, rationalism is a very broad category for a very diverse set of theories. Yet these theories share some important characteristics. For instance, they depict actors as goal oriented and self-interested. Moreover, they share a methodological deductivist approach, where it is assumed that actions follow a reasonable logic.

Of course, important differences between the theoretical approaches are also to be found. These differences for instance relate to diverse interpretations of what is the (perceived) ultimate goal is, or, what the 'currency' is of self-interest (power, interest, knowledge). Moreover, different rationalist theories can also assume different behavioural patterns (seeking relative gains, or, absolute gains). Subsequently, theories under the same rationalist meta-theoretical umbrella can make contradictory claims. This may lead to lasting ontological debates, yet it could also be argued that rationalist theories can work together because they share the same meta-theoretical perspective. Hasenclever e.a. (2000:7) have argued that a synthesis approach would be more rewarding than a "full victory" for one or another rationalist approach.

Without aiming a complete discussion of all possible rationalist theories, in the following we discuss functionalism, networks and (economic) resources exchanges as possible rationalist explanatory vantage points for the emergence of transnational public policy networks in global sustainability politics.

Functionalism

According to the functionalist theoretical perspective, transnational public policy partnerships emerge from a certain perceived needs, manifested in an institutional void, an empty institutional space (Arts 2003: 34), made up by multiple functional governance gaps. Peter Haas (2004) specifies the governance gap by listing nine governance functions (agenda setting; framing; monitoring; verification; rule making; norm development; enforcement, capacity building and financing) that are unevenly addressed in current global environmental governance. Some scholars stress the changing role of traditional foci of governance, for instance, Frank Biermann and Klaus Dingwerth (2004) observe that states, in spite of considerable efforts, often fail to

effectively address global environmental change, leaving a functional demand for non-state actors to assume a more prominent role. As old institutions fail to deliver effective governance, new institutional arrangements come forward. In the current world this usually means that non-state and non-governmental actor driven institution increasingly supplements old loci of global governance, namely nation-states and international organisations.

Interestingly, in functionalist arguments we observe a persisting confusion between normative and empirical questions of emergence. Scholars observe functionalist emergence as development in the real world, for instance, Adil Najam e.a. (2004), for instance, observe a *de facto* system of global environmental governance consisting of state and non-state actors. At the same time scholars deem the emergence of governance arrangements as something advantageous, for instance Adil Najam e.a. also suggest that global environmental governance ‘remains incomplete’, suggesting there is something as a complete environmental governance. Similarly, Haas (2004: 8) stresses the *need* for new decentralised, densely networked institutions and a division of labour between ‘governments, NGOs, the private sector, scientific networks and international institutions’. Some scholars even see proof of a *replacement*, a shift in governance from confrontational model to collaborative models on a win-win basis, from sovereign governance to post-sovereign governance (Karkkainen 2004: 75). However, these normative arguments, as coherent and reasonable as they may be, often lack a solid empirical basis. The shift in governance from older institutional forms to newer ones may not as clear-cut and directional as has sometimes been suggested.

Policy network theory

In 1998 Tanja Börzel noted the near Babylonian confusion about the term “policy network” (Börzel 1998). The term was used to refer to an analytical model, a theory, or as a method. Moreover, a policy network could refer to a meso-economic structure applying to all kinds of relations between private and public actors, or, it could refer to a specific form of governance through a specific set of relations.

The emergence of partnerships as as specific policy networks of governance can be explained by societal change (functional disaggregation, differentiation, communications revolution, etcetera). In contemporary international relations discussions the somewhat opaque process of globalisation has often been alluded to as the driving force behind developments various societal realms. Purportedly this has given rise to policy networks (Kenis and Schneider 1991; Kooiman 1993; Mayntz 1993; Reinicke 1998; Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002).

This connection between the emergence of global public policy partnerships and globalisation has for instance been observed by Reinicke e.a. (1997: 11-12). Reinicke e.a. understand globalization as a progressing micro-economic linking of markets, corporations, units within firms, etc. This form of globalisation reflects in an organisational structure resembling a network including various non-state and state actors. In this perspective government is still necessary, but rather than the primary actor in traditional international relations, it is only one of many nodes in a much wider policy network.

The 'rational choice' for a network type of organization is informed by their ability to better coordinate dispersed resources and under conditions of societal change. Consequently, public policy networks emerge where other forms of steering (through government hierarchy or market) do result in optimal resource mobilisation and coordination.

In regard to policy networks as a meso-economic structure, the emergence of transnational public policy partnerships has often been explained by market mechanisms. According to this explanation, coordination and distribution in the environment of a free markets is best served by network type of organisation (Cutler, Haufler, and Porter 1999). While this account shares a rationalist perspective with functionalism, its vantage point is not functional gaps; rather it understands the emergence of new institutions from economic coordination and distribution problems.

Some of the confusion, that Börzel (1998) referred to, remains, even in a narrower theoretical discussion of public policy networks as a specific form of governance. Most notably, confusion between the normative and the empirical question of emergence persists. For instance, Reinicke (1998) in his discussion of global public policy networks refers to empirical cases in financial markets, crime and industry, however he also forecasts "the next step toward global public policy network is to fill the most important gaps and establish the missing links identified in each policy domain" (228). The public policy network method is further used as a normative blueprint in the European Commission's White Paper on governance (CEC 2001). This repetitive progression by blueprinting of public policy networks seems to be at odds with the rational choice of this form of governance, for better coordination and resource mobilization.

Non-rationalist explanations

Rationalist theories are goal-oriented, and take self-interest as a vantage point. These theories assume explanatory power with actors themselves. An actor focus may seem 'reasonable', however rationalism has also encountered much criticism. The ability for actors to foresee costs and benefits and their ability to act upon what they deem is reasonable is restricted. Nobel prize laureate Herbert Simon (1957) argues that there are the limits to the rationality of people; people are also emotional and at times irrational beings. This multifacetedness of people inevitably reflects in their actions. The limits to rationality apply also to organisations and institutions. In the field of international relations, actor-rationality has been widely assumed so-called realist theories, that presume power-maximizing states are the ultimate actors in global politics. However, in the same vein, one could argue that state actors are also restricted in maximising their interests, by traditions, by institutions, by non-state actors. Such bounded rationality gives leeway to a whole other set of non-rationalistic explanations. In the following we will discuss institutionalism and discursive theories as alternative explanations for the emergence of transnational public policy partnerships.

Institutionalism

Arguably, the partnership model of governance is remarkably established. It does not necessarily change with the demand for new governance, although at times it has also been commended for being a flexible type of institutional arrangement. Partnerships in global environmental governance need not to be better at filling functional gaps than an old school international regime, nor do they always emerge where the need for governance is greatest. One of the emergence accounts that better explain these 'irrational' patterns of emergence is institutionalism. According to the institutional account, partnerships may not always emerge as result of intentional efforts; rather, the emergence takes place in an organisational context. The institutional model of partnerships is copied after initial success in other policy fields. Policy makers often lack time and resources to look for the most optimal solutions, instead they turn to a steady flow of best practices, and choose for the beaten track.

A sociological variant applies network theory (e.g. DiMaggio and Walter 1983), unlike the network perspective outlined before, the sociological understanding of networks is more tangible and homogeneous, as e.g. professional networks and expert associations who develop certain societal norms. Indeed, in studies of public administration it is quite well established that policy makers make choices, not on the basis of rational or comprehensive analysis, but "on a partial review ... a number of preconceived normative judgments and assumptions" (Flinders 2005: 236). In such (policy) networks, ideas of social fitness and standard models emerge which in turn

result in certain types of institutional arrangements through e.g. discursive mechanisms. Moreover, from a public administrative perspective, the emergence of institutional collaboration can also be seen as a confluence of problem, policy, organisational and social-economic streams (Kingdon 1984). This theory has mainly been applied within national political systems, however collaborative windows of opportunity could also be discerned in global governance (Pattberg 2004; Lober 1997).

The institutionalist perspective provides with a wide array explanations for the emergence of partnerships and similar institutional arrangements. However, these explanations are often typically void of (political) power as an influential factor, rather they focus upon the structure as the context where reorganisation of global governance occurs.

Discursive and critical theories

Power plays a bigger role in discursive and critical theories.

Pauly (in Biersteker 2003) provides with a discursive argument for the emergence of partnerships and other collaborative arrangements. He argues that private governance arrangements and organisational blueprints are more and more applied because actors act upon a language of inevitability. Discourse is not neutral, and those actors applying or stimulating it often gain from it. These actors can be traditional governments, but regarding the emergence of transnational public policy partnerships, much attention has focused on the role of business actors. For instance, Marina Ottaway understands the rise of collaborative governance institutions as a means to incorporate new political actors into the existing political establishment without threatening the status quo (Ottaway 2001: 26). The emergence of transnational public policy partnerships in this perspective is part of a reinvention of corporatism. In the same vein, Rutherford observes that Partnerships and other voluntary approaches, 'as other than business groups willingly coalesce around business perspectives on the environment' (Rutherford 2006: 98).

Other scholars propose critical analysis like Neo-Gramscianism. This strand assumes that political, social and economic elites enact new discourses and institutions to retain and consolidate their hegemonic positions. The emergence of partnership e.g. sustainable development is therefore to be interpreted as a shift in governance discourse purposely working for elites to hang on to their positions. Levy and Newell, for instance, (2002) apply neo-Gramscianism to 'the firm as a political actor' (Levy and Newell 2002: 91).

The strength of discursive theories and neo-Gramscianism is its holistic theoretical framework, which provides complete narratives instead of partial and circumstantial evidence. However, a deductive approach also brings a potential pitfall, namely early exclusion of other possible

theories. The emergence of partnerships is not necessarily the triumph of corporate interests, nor does it unavoidably lead to the consolidation of a certain elite's position.

Part 2: Patterns of Emergence

The diversity of the discussed theories reflects the current state of knowledge on the emergence of transnational public policy networks: there is much hypothetical explanation, however, there is few evidence for a specific theory. While some of the theories could be compatible - it has for instance been suggested that the rationalist theories could make up into a grand rationalist theory - many contradictions are manifest. In the light of these contradictory theoretical explanations, it is important to observe *patterns* of emergence of transnational public policy partnerships. Since the theories discussed have specific implications for geographic, policy area and participatory patterns of emergence, observed discrepancies between the theoretically expected patterns and actual patterns of emergence render insight as to which theoretical argument best explain the emergence of transnational public policy partnerships.

Geographic patterns of emergence

Partnerships' emergence is often explained in the context of a globalization, which is often understood as a distinctly deterritorialized process. Indeed, in terms of communications, physical space does not seem to matter anymore. However, in terms of governance, physical space is still a relevant factor. One might be inclined to think otherwise, since there a shift away from government by nation-states, which are distinctly territorial entities. Yet most governance arrangements that emerge are not less territorial. According to Saskia Sassen (in: Hall and Biersteker 2002: 12) globalisation is – in fact – a very territorialised process, taking place in, for instance, financial centers, and so-called global cities. Similarly, Kobrin (in: Hall and Biersteker 2002: 9) also advances territorialisation as an attribute of globalization. However, unlike the heydays of the nation-state, emerging authorities are overlapping, creating a patchwork and a neo-mediaeval governance structure.

Given the territoriality of globalization and shifts in governance, it is reasonable to expect partnerships do not necessarily emerge evenly across the globe. Rather, some physical spaces

make a better environment than others to foster the emergence (and effectiveness) of partnerships. Therefore, an important question is: where do partnerships emerge?

Some literature suggests that partnerships thrive in the 'North', or 'western liberal democratic' spaces. There are two views to this argument. The first one could be considered a political modernisation perspective, the second is more critical. In the political modernisation perspective, partnerships are an element in a wider political development towards greater participation and accountability. Ronit and Schneider (1999: 246), for instance, argue that, 'governance through private organizations, realistically, is restricted to the more developed parts of the world'. This suggestion is based on the distinctive multi-sectoral participatory quality of partnership arrangements and the (assumed) participation of private actors. A political space that allows for a 'vibrant civil society' has a critical mass of non-state actors to conduct governance through partnerships. Alternatively, many development countries lack scientific associations, business and consumer groups to provide public goods through partnerships. According to this view the importance of the nation-state environment is certainly not to be discounted, the nation-state can still assist global governance by for instance translating private norms to international rules. In a developed context, partnerships do not emerge in a void, but they are embedded in an existing more or less partnership enabling institutional environment.

The second view on the emergence of partnerships as a 'North' driven process could be considered a critical perspective on international relations. In this perspective, partnerships are a tool to consolidate power structures in international relations. The object identified as 'North' varies very much, the 'hegemon' could be, for instance, the US, global business elites, political elites, industrialised countries, etc. It is important to notice that this perspective (and variants of this perspective) does not rule out the emergence of partnerships in other than Northern contexts, rather Northern actors take the initiative to form partnerships.

Such observations in current literature are not necessarily tied to one specific theory, as earlier discussed. Yet a 'political modernization' perspective seems to have more in common with rationalist theoretical arguments, and the 'critical' perspective seems to share more commonalities with non-rationalist explanations. The following table presents some hypotheses regarding the geographic patterns of emergence, along with some possible indicators, by theoretical category. As earlier mentioned, the discussed theories are not exhaustive, moreover, variations of the same strand of theories could suggest quite different hypothesis. Therefore, the table is not conclusive but it aims to highlight some possible geographic implications of theoretical assumptions, which

can be subsequently used to discern discrepancies with actually observed geographic patterns of emergence in a large N study.

Geographic Patterns of Emergence

Functionalism	Emergence in places where government is capability decreasing	More partnerships in places where governments retreat
Policy network theories	Emergence in places where organisational density is high	More partnerships in places with many non-state actors
Institutionalism	Emergence in places where many institutions are in place	More partnerships where integration into international relations is high (e.g. IO memberships)
Neo-Gramscianist	Emergence in places where business is strong.	More partnerships are found in places with many MNCs

Policy area patterns of emergence

The structure and features of a particular policy area can affect the emergence of partnerships. Cutler e.a. (1999), for instance, have argued that a market structure encourages private governance. However, do markets provide with a sufficient coordination mechanism to provide public goods? It has also been argued that oligarchic market structures are more prone to private and hybrid governance than markets with an indefinite number of players: the fewer players in a certain sector, the more visible they are for e.g. consumer organisations and NGOs to scrutinise and to pressure for self-regulation. Ronit (1999) e.a. for instance suggest that 'in general, an effective sanctioning system seems more manageable in small or federated organizations, where the visibility of each member is high' (1999: 262).

In sum, partnerships emerge in and across existing policy areas but some policy areas are probably more supportive to governance by transnational public policy partnerships than others.

It is difficult to formulate hypotheses around policy area patterns of the emergence of partnerships because policy areas are rarely fixed, often overlap and partnerships often cross various areas. Observations in current literature have not provided with a systematic formulation

of hypotheses. The following table attempt to formulate some hypotheses regarding the policy area patterns of emergence, along with some possible indicators, by theoretical category. As aforementioned, the discussed theories are not exhaustive, moreover, variations of theories could suggest quite different hypothesis. Again, the table is not conclusive but it is useful as to emphasize theoretical implications of the policy area patterns of emergence of transnational public policy partnerships.

Policy Area Patterns of Emergence

Functionalism	Emergence in areas where government is capability decreasing	More partnerships In areas with low government involvement (E.g. transboundary problems)
Policy network theories	Emergence in areas where organisational density is high	More partnerships in areas involving many sectors
Institutionalism	Emergence in areas with many existing institutions	More partnerships in areas that are densely institutionalized
Neo-Gramscianist	Emergence in areas where business is strong.	More partnerships in monopolistic and oligopolistic markets

Participatory Patterns of emergence

A bulk of literature suggested some participatory emergence patterns in partnerships and similar institutional arrangements. Indeed, a distinctive element of partnership governance is the participation of multiple (non-state) actors. The respective literature on corporate social responsibility, new public management, and transnational advocacy networks, has distinct perspectives on which actors partner up.

In corporate social responsibility literature, the evidence for partnerships lies with changed attitudes and behaviour of business actors (Hartman, Hofman, and Stafford 1999; Hartman and Stafford 1997). Partnerships have increasingly become a corporative strategy (e.g.: Juniper and Moore 2002). An early example of business initiated partnerships is from 1996, when the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) initiated the International Business Action on Climate Change campaign, calling for public-private partnerships (see 1996

International Business Action on Climate Change – executive summary). Interestingly, most business actors involved in global governance partnerships concern big multi-national companies. Indeed, the membership of the WBCSD consists solely of MNCs. This could confirm the proposition that highly visible business actors are more inclined to initiate partnerships, since they are under closer scrutiny by consumers' associations and NGOs.

New public management and similar perspectives (e.g. Hood 1991; Savas 2000) explain the emergence of partnerships from the presumed inefficiency of traditional government and the alleged efficiency of the private sector. The conjuncture of economic liberalisation, increasing complexity of public management and budget constraints, has pressured governments (at different levels) to acquire resources to conduct and implement policies. Public-private arrangements answer to the demands for more resources and higher implementation capacity. On a more critical note, public-private arrangement could also defer politically sensitive issues to mere management and resources issues. The new public management perspective has taken off in the context of national government, especially the UK and the US. However, the perspective could be applied at the level of international relations and intergovernmental organisations (such as the UN) and supranational organisations (such as the EU). In the nineties the UN suffered a severe lack of funding, partly attributable to payment arrears by some of its most prominent members. Instead of becoming a lame organisation, the UN sought for alternative resources through partnerships. Secretary General Kofi Annan has been much credited for this politico-administrative move. Looking at the websites and recent documents of the UN (e.g. "Partnerships for Sustainable Development" (UN 2003, available at: www.un.org/esa/sustdev/partnerships) and the World Bank and like organisations, partnerships have indeed been lauded and widely applied. The proposition that international and intergovernmental organisations merit the emergence of partnerships in global governance is, at least apparently, feasible.

The emergence of partnerships in global governance has also been attributed to the rise of transnational advocacy (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Hudson 2001). NGOs and other interest organisations become more and more accustomed to the language of business and international organisations. Moreover, some NGO representatives find business actors more responsive to their causes than traditional government.

There are questions to be asked on how widely supported the move towards partnerships is. In the preparation of the 2002 Johannesburg Summit, type 2 partnerships were applauded by some NGOs (e.g. WNF, IUCN), while others, like Friends of the Earth International (FOE 2003), refused to take part in them. Should these opposing perspectives be regarded as a rift between

advocacy organisations or is there ordering development towards a division of labour in the non-profit sector? Moreover, the emergence of partnerships in countries without a vibrant civil society, like China, would suggest that the role of NGOs and other interest organisations is in fact more limited than often suggested.

Such observations in corporate social responsibility, new public management, and transnational advocacy networks literature are not necessarily tied to one of theories discussed earlier.

However, many commonalities are found between the respective literature and some of the discussed theories. For instance, new public management and corporate social responsibility literature seems to have more in common with rationalist theoretical arguments. Transnational advocacy arguments seem to share more with non-rationalist explanations, as it can be understood as the institutionalisation of a global civil society. However, a rationalist reading of transnational advocacy arguments is also possible, as transnational advocacy coalitions could also be seen as a form of network coordination. The following table suggest some more hypotheses and indicators regarding the participatory patterns of emergence.

Participatory Patterns of Emergence

Functionalism	Partnerships are initiated by governments whose capability is decreasing	In most partnerships government is a partner, not necessarily the lead partner
Policy network theories	Partnerships are initiated bottom-up by non-state actors	Many partnerships are led by civil society actors
Institutionalism	Partnerships are initiated in forums and epistemic/learning communities	Many partnerships feature similar types and number of actors and division of tasks
Neo-Gramscianist	partnerships are initiated by elites that consolidate positions	Many partnerships are initiated and led by strong business and states

Part 3: The Emergence of WSSD Partnerships

Observations in current literature and insights from current theories provide with a many hypotheses regarding patterns of emergence of global public policy partnerships.

In the discussion of geographic, policy area, and participatory patterns of emergence we tried to systematically formulate and categorise such hypothesis and suggest possible indicators, by theoretical category. In so doing, we highlight some possible implications of theoretical assumptions on patterns of emergence. This facilitates a better discerning of discrepancies with actually observed geographic patterns of emergence. In this section, we try to explain the emergence of a specific set of partnerships, the WSSD partnerships, which were devised in 2002 at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The selection of WSSD partnerships (321) provides with a unique opportunity to understand patterns of emergence, because there is a clear delimited set of them.

Geographic patterns of emergence

The specific set of WSSD partnerships carries a specific geographic pattern of emergence. Unlike partnerships in the policy areas of e.g. international finance, WSSD partnerships are not necessarily emerging and implemented in places where e.g. organisational density is high (in 'the North'). Rather, WSSD partnerships specifically deal with issues of sustainability that are most prevalent in 'the South'. However, the question concerning geographic patterns of emergence is still relevant. For instance, one could hypothesise from functionalist perspective that participatory forms of institutional arrangements would fill legitimacy gaps, therefore partnerships arise where the legitimacy gap is greatest (specifically, countries not classified as democratic). However, another functional hypothesis could argue for quite another geographic pattern of emergence: in lowest developed countries, where state capacity is the weakest, the implementation gap is the widest, giving leeway for partnerships to emerge. Yet, from a network theoretical perspective, or an institutionalist perspective, one could argue quite the opposite: participatory forms of governance such as governance through transnational are most viable in countries that allow for a vibrant civil society.

Perhaps because of the specific geographic bias on development countries in the set of WSSD partnerships, few scholars have investigated it. Andonova and Levy (2003: 28) noted that Indonesia and South Africa participate in a disproportionate number of WSSD. Which probably has to do with the fact that these countries respectively hosted the pre-WSSD process and the

WSSD. Furthermore they noted that countries participating in partnerships are usually not the ones that need it the most. Hale and Mauzerall (Hale and Mauzerall 2004: 231) observed that six countries (Australia, France, Indonesia, the US, Italy and Japan) account for 70% of the partnerships led by government. These findings indicate that geographic patterns of emergence are not readily explained by functionalist theories or network theories. Indeed, non-rationalist theories seem to better explain why partnerships emerge where there is no need for partnerships, or where organisational density is not highest. It is important to note that both Andonova and Levy, and Hale and Mauzerall look at countries and governments of countries *as partners*. Much of the geographic patterns of emergence remain to be explained in terms of countries *as implementation context*. In a country like China, the new public management assumption of decreasing government capacity in terms of revenue is not evenly applicable, and the NGO sector is heavily regulated, yet close to 40 sustainable development partnerships have been registered that are active in China.

Policy area patterns of emergence

Why do partnerships emerge in a certain policy area whereas other policy areas seem to be void of partnerships? For instance, private and hybrid forms of governance have for instance emerged in the financial sector (accountings standards, see: Nölke 2005) and the trade sector (ISO standards), yet partnerships are relatively rare in the security realm (although there are transnational networks of mercenaries in African conflict areas).

The WSSD partnerships particularly deal with issues of sustainable development, yet they are not evenly spread across issues like water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity. A well-established argument is theory explaining the emergence of partnerships concerns the governance gap (see above). One could hypothesise, according to this theory that partnerships arise in policy areas where there is a simultaneous need and lack of governance. This argument is typically demand driven. The measure of demand drivenness has, however, been somewhat discredited in the case of WSSD partnerships (Andonova and Levy 2003). Hale and Mauzerall (2004: 233) observed that some key issues do not receive the attention they deserve. WSSD partnerships have also been criticized for not addressing substantial issues such as food security, biodiversity and fresh water, most of them rather aim at capacity building, education and information for decision-making (Andonova and Levy 2003: 25).

Current indicative findings therefore suggest that rationalist theories fall short in explaining the policy area patterns of emergence. For instance, in 2005 the number of WSSD partnerships dealing with water issues increased significantly: was this hike attributable to an increasing

demand for global governance in water related issues, or does this reflect a changing international political and diplomatic agenda?.

Participatory patterns of emergence

The WSSD partnerships were devised in the context of the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable Development, which may render an approach of these partnerships as diplomatic outcomes fruitful. In the context of their time and place of framing, WSSD partnerships have been criticized for substituting international agreements (SDIN 2002) and unclear follow-up procedures (Hens and Nath 2003). Indeed, in spite of the participation of many NGOs and business actors at the summit, the negotiation process of the WSSD has usually been regarded an intergovernmental process. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), for instance, actively supported partnerships as a governance tool in sustainable development in the preparations for the 2002 Johannesburg Summit for Sustainable Development. However, business involvement in partnerships (both in terms of financial support and in terms of devising partnerships) has been meagre.

The WSSD being also one of the biggest gatherings of civil society organizations and business in history does not necessarily make policy network theories relevant to explain the participatory pattern in WSSD partnerships. Rather there seems to be a disconnection between the participation at the conference and the WSSD partnerships as an outcome of the summit. A discursive approach to explain the emergence of WSSD partnerships therefore seems justifiable: the emergence of WSSD partnership as a result of 'partnership talk'. The partnership discourse has been ingrained into e.g. the UN organisation, the outcome may be resulting from standard operating (institutional) procedures.

Conclusion

Various theories seek rational explanations for the emergence of global sustainability partnerships. While these theories are popular in the field of international relations they have rarely been tested for transnational public policy partnerships. Moreover, other, 'non-rationalistic' explanations cannot be excluded; this paper will therefore also discuss institutionalist theories, and critical theories as possible explanatory frameworks.

In the second part of this paper we will examine the *patterns* of emergence of transnational public policy partnerships. The theories discussed have specific implications for the geographic, sectoral and participatory patterns of emergence. Observed discrepancies between the theoretical

discussion of the emergence of partnerships and patterns of emergence raise the question whether current theories sufficiently provide with an analytical framework for the appraisal of partnerships.

We discussed functionalism, networks and (economic) resources exchanges as possible rationalist explanatory vantage points for the emergence of transnational public policy networks in global sustainability politics. We also discussed institutionalism and discursive theories as alternative explanations for the emergence of transnational public policy partnerships.

The diversity of the discussed theories reflects the current state of knowledge on the emergence of transnational public policy networks: there is much theorising, but there is few evidence for any specific theory. While some of the theories could be compatible - it has for instance been suggested that the rationalist theories could make up into a grand rationalist theory - many contradictions are manifest. In the light of these contradictory theoretical explanations, it is important to observe *patterns* of emergence of transnational public policy partnership. Since the theories discussed have specific implications for geographic, policy area and participatory patterns of emergence, observed discrepancies between the theoretically expected patterns and actual patterns of emergence render insight as to which theoretical argument best explain the emergence of transnational public policy partnerships.

Observations in current literature and insights from current theories provide many hypotheses regarding patterns of emergence of global public policy partnerships.

In the discussion of geographic, policy area, and participatory patterns of emergence we tried to systematically formulate and categorise such hypothesis and suggest possible indicators, by theoretical category. In so doing, we highlighted some possible implications of theoretical assumptions on patterns of emergence. This facilitates a better discerning of discrepancies with actually observed geographic patterns of emergence. In the third section, we tried to explain the emergence of a specific set of partnerships, the WSSD partnerships, which were devised in 2002 at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The selection of WSSD partnerships provides with a unique opportunity to understand patterns of emergence, because there is a clearly delimited set, belonging to the same process. In the specific case of the emergence of WSSD partnerships we found that accepted rationalist explanations could not fully account for the observed patterns of emergence.

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