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THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE PROJECT

'Global governance' has become a key term in many academic and policy debates. While an Internet search conducted in 1997 revealed only 3418 references to 'global governance' and in January 2004 less than 90,000, in May 2007 the World Wide Web listed 2,370,000 pages that mentioned the term. Global governance has become a rallying call for policy advocates who hail it as panacea for the evils of economic and ecological globalisation; a global menace for opponents who fear it as the universal hegemony of the many by the powerful few; and an analytical concept for new empirical phenomena of world politics that has given rise to much discussion among scholars. Yet despite a growing body of new literature, even the very meaning of the term 'global governance' remains disputed and many of its elements are yet insufficiently understood.

To contribute to academic and policy debates on global governance is the aim of the Global Governance Project (GLOGOV.ORG). The Project is a joint research programme of 11 European research institutions that seeks to advance understanding of the new actors, institutions and mechanisms of global governance. While we address the phenomenon of global governance in general, most of our research projects focus on global environmental change and governance for sustainable development.

The Global Governance Project is co-ordinated by the Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM) of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and includes associate faculty members and research fellows from 11 European institutions: Science Po Bordeaux, University of Bremen, Freie Universität Berlin (Environmental Policy Research Centre), Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Institute for European Studies), The Fridtjof Nansen Institute, London School of Economics and Political Science, Oldenburg University, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Wageningen University. The Project was created in 2001 with the endorsement of the Institutional Dimensions core project of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP/IDGEC).

Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, co-ordinator

Institute for Environmental Studies (IVM)

Bremen University

Freie Universität Berlin

The Fridtjof Nansen Institute

London School of Economics and Political Science

Lund University

Oldenburg University

Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

SciencesPo Bordeaux

Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Wageningen University

Analytically, we define global governance—as opposed to traditional interstate relations—by three criteria, which we have also chosen to shape the research groups within the Project.

THE NEW ACTORS OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

First, we see global governance as characterised by increasing participation of actors other than states, ranging from private actors such as multinational corporations and (networks of) scientists and environmentalists to intergovernmental organisations ('multiactor governance'). These new actors of global governance are the focus of our research group MANUS—Managers of Global Change. Given that nongovernmental activist groups or scientists have been extensively studied, the MANUS team has decided to focus on better understanding of the role of international bureaucracies in global governance. Within a theoretical framework that draws on sociological institutionalism, we seek to understand the influence of international bureaucracies in global (environmental) governance, how variation in their influence can be explained and how they can 'learn' to improve their effectiveness.

In order to study these questions, the group has elaborated a theoretical framework of hypotheses and variables with about 120 indicators. This framework is applied to in-depth case studies that include major agencies—the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the International Maritime Organisation—but also secretariats to multilateral environmental agreements, which have been rarely included in research programmes, namely the secretariats of the conventions on climate change, biodiversity, desertification and ozone depletion. Other agencies and programmes studied are the UN Environment Programme, the UN Development Programme and the Global Environment Facility. These case studies are augmented by a senior expert survey that covers Germany, India, Mexico and the United States. First results have appeared as working papers on our website.

THE NEW MECHANISMS OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Second, global governance is marked by new mechanisms of co-operation such as public-private and private-private partnerships, along with the traditional system of legal treaties negotiated by states. This is the focus of our research group MECGLO—New Mechanisms of Global Governance. Here, we analyse why and how non-state actors engage in rule-making with little or no involvement of public actors, and how various types of transnational environmental rule-making differ in terms of their legitimacy. Our case studies include the Marine Stewardship Council, the Forest Stewardship Council, the Centre for Environmental Leadership in Business, the Coalition for Environmentally Responsible Economies, the World Commission on Dams, the ISO 14000 process, the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements, the Euro-Retailer Produce Working Group, and—for comparative analysis—also a few intergovernmental negotiations. A major new project, funded by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, analyses the effectiveness and legitimacy of the Partnerships for Sustainability ('type-2 outcomes') that have been agreed in the process of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. A second major new project explores the notion of reflexive governance in the public interest.

INCREASING SEGMENTATION OF GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Third, global governance is defined through increasing segmentation of different layers and clusters of rule-making and rule-implementing, both vertically between supranational, international, national and subnational layers of authority ('multilevel governance') and horizontally between different parallel rule-making systems maintained by different groups of actors. This stands at the centre of our research group MOSAIC—'Multiple Options, Solutions and Approaches: (Institutional) Interplay and Conflict'. Two studies focus on horizontal interplay at the intersection of trade and environment; a third study addresses the vertical dimension, examining the influence of international actors, processes and institutions on domestic environmental policy-making.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

In addition to academic research, we seek to facilitate policy-related debate on global governance, for instance through organising workshops and speaker events or through a recent book that presents the central arguments in favour and against the creation of a world environment organisation.

THE EUROPEAN CONFERENCES

To increase academic debate on global environmental governance, we initiated in 2001 in Berlin a European conference series on the human dimensions of global environmental change, which has evolved into a regular venue in this field. Keynote speakers have included ministers, senior UN executives and chairs of global research programmes.

THE WEBSITE

More information on the Global Governance Project is available at our website at www.glogov.org.

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