

The duality of organizations and policies in global environmental governance

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All the spooks, fairies, essences, and entities that once had inhabited portions of matter now [take] flight to new homes, mostly in or at the human body...The ‘mind’ as ‘actor,’ still in use in present-day psychologies and sociologies, is the old self-acting ‘soul’ with its immortality stripped off. Dewey and Bentley (1949:113)

Introduction¹

A general reading of recent thinking about global governance reveals two broad trends.² On the one hand, concepts originating in domestic politics are being usefully applied to the international realm. Scholars have drawn on notions of deliberative democracy,³ communicative action,⁴ and public spheres⁵ to extend and refine our understanding of world politics and move beyond the dichotomy between the logic of consequences and the logic of appropriateness. On the other hand, international relations (IR) theory has increasingly accommodated constructivist approaches as a legitimate alternative to (neo)realist and (neo)liberalist doctrine. In particular, the claims that normative leverage significantly complements material bases of power and that actors' preferences, interests, and identities can change through interaction, socialization,⁶ and learning have gained extensive currency in IR. Recurrent forays into ontological territory have also suggested that causal arrows between agency and structure can run both ways.⁷

1 I thank Chris Ansell for encouraging me to write this paper as an outcome of a conversation held in March 2005. It represents but a first attempt to formulate what is sure to take much more time and constructive criticism to mature.

2 This paper does not exclusively address environmental politics. The theoretical argument may apply to other issue-areas, although an attempt is made to identify examples and citations from the global environmental politics literature (which at any rate has arguably more empirical material on governance to draw on than other international issue areas).

3 Risse 2000

4 Risse 2004

5 Mitzen 2005

6 Checkel 2004, Johnston 2001

7 Wendt 1999

These two trends have frequently intersected to produce novel perspectives and empirical results. For instance, emphasis on discursive practices characteristic of reasoned argumentation in communicative action, combined with the recognition of non-state actors' skillful management of international norms has produced insights into the role of non-governmental actors in socializing states in the areas of human rights. Similarly, domestic concepts of deliberative democracy and public spheres have informed a burgeoning literature on the institutional and normative implications of cosmopolitan⁸ and transnational⁹ democracy.

This paper attempts to add to this cross-fertilization by extending a related but previously neglected area of domestic political inquiry, policy network analysis, to the study of global environmental governance;¹⁰ however, the following conceptual argument takes the encounter between the two trends a step further by applying a relational view to global public spheres in order examine the emergence of issues areas and concomitant policies from the perspective of patterns of interactions among state and non-state actors. More specifically, it argues that while the classic policy cycle that proceeds from agenda setting to negotiation, implementation and via monitoring back to agenda setting is useful in analytically separating different dimensions of policy making, it also leads to a linear understanding that conceptualizes policies as prior to organizations. Instead, I propose that the mutual constitution of agency and structure, which has been examined in the context of domestic policy networks as well as in constructivist versions of international regime theory, gives rise to the possibility of assessing the shape and directions of policies on the basis of actor constellations. In this I concur with Meyer, Boli and Thomas et al. who recall that 'the common notion that the actor performs the action is only half the truth – at the institutional

⁸ Archibugi 2004, Bohman 1999, Cochran 2002, Fine & Smith 2003, Held 1995

⁹ Dryzek 1999

¹⁰ While the domestic policy networks has so far failed to be considered by global environmental politics scholars, it has had considerable appeal to students of multi-level governance in the European Union. See Ansell et al 1997, Marks et al. 1996, Hooghe 1996

level, action also creates the actor.”¹¹ In other words, the duality of organizations and policies implies that agency creates, reproduces and changes structure by way of practices, including the policies devised to address collective problems. Policies do not exist independently of the actors who create and implement them, just as actors do not exist independently of the policies in which they have a stake.

The argument proceeds as follows. The next section identifies common themes in the literatures on international regimes and global (or international) public spheres in order to provide a picture of the context in which international policy-making takes place. This context is increasingly characterized by a multitude of state and non-state actors whose discursive and behavioral practices influence preferences, interests, identities, and policies. Second, a brief examination of the domestic policy network literature with a focus on relational approaches aims at revealing the conceptual tools that may be fruitfully applied to global public spheres. Notwithstanding their own internal disagreements, students of policy networks have generally sought to establish causal connections between the structure and makeup of networks and policy outcomes.

Third, the understanding of global public spheres as complemented by insights from the policy network literature is revisited from a relational vantage point. The resulting approach to global governance and public spheres (selectively) draws on Georg Simmel’s sociology and George Herbert Mead’s pragmatism to create a framework for analyzing the duality of organizations and policies. In this framework, methods from social network analysis that evolve around affiliation networks are introduced to simultaneously (dialectically) examine organizations and policies with a view to explain the latter on the basis of the former.

The reader may gain insights from this thought experiment in three areas. First, although the international relations literature on governance without government has

11 Meyer et al. 1987:23 in Cederman & Daase 2003:15

increasingly used the language of networks, the rich conceptual and empirical sources on domestic policy networks have barely been considered. Bringing these two literatures together may provide new perspectives in both directions (although the focus of this paper is on the encounter's implications for global governance). Second, although the large majority of constructivist scholars of international relations implicitly rely on a structuralist ontology, the corresponding relational implications are rarely addressed, at least by mainstream constructivists. Building on Simmel, Mead, and social network analysis, the article hopes to add conceptual thickness to the co-constitution of actors and their environments in global governance. The article also hopes to provide methodological inspiration to students of international relations interested in adding empirical flesh to existing conceptual frameworks. Finally, the participant and practitioner in global governance arrangements may have confirmed conceptually what she might have known strategically, namely that the public emergence of a certain problem and its translation into mitigative policies depends on a particular orrery of social actors.

International regimes meet global public spheres

Matters of global governance are largely carried out in functionally differentiated social contexts. While the international relations literature for the past twenty-five years has mostly referred to such sites as international regimes, a growing number of scholars have started to examine global public spheres – broadly defined after Habermas as comprehensively accessible transnational sites where decisions are made on the basis of an argument's strength rather than an actor's leverage – as an alternative concept. It is in these sites, which I may collectively refer to as 'international organizational fields' (IOFs), that state and non-state actors participate in an ever-increasing number of summits, conference of

parties meetings, technical workshops, and seminars.¹² It is also from these sites that collective action aimed at alleviating issue-specific problems emanate. The difference between international regimes and global public spheres is that the regime concept tends to lend itself to more highly aggregated units of analysis; places relatively more emphasis on nation states, frequently as unitary, rational actors, than on non-state actors; and is less normatively oriented. By contrast, global public sphere theorists are primarily interested in the micro context of communication among deliberating social actors; largely draw on the writing of Jürgen Habermas; and often entertain a normative dimension related to the promotion of democratic rights at the global level. This section takes a look at the two concepts in order to accomplish three tasks. First, it reviews hypotheses about regime/sphere formation with a special emphasis on the relationship between organizations and policies. Second, it investigates the possibility and mechanisms for changes in preferences, interests, and identities, which constitutes an important building block in the later argument about how policies can be explained on the basis of organizations. And third, it assesses the extent to which writing about the two concepts has considered ontological factors, particularly the ways in which governance sites are co-constitutive with their constituent members, policy outcomes, and the larger socio-political environment.

The formation of international regimes and global public spheres

Scholarship on international environmental governance has largely focused on regimes, their creation, design, and more recently their effectiveness.¹³ The regime literature

12 The terminological affinity to the concept ‘organizational field’ is intentional. New institutionalists of organizational sociology Powell and DiMaggio (1991) use the term to denote a structure that includes “all relevant actors,” exists only insofar as it is institutionally defined through structuration, which consists of four parts: (i) increased interaction among organized actors in the field, (ii) the development of structures of domination and patterns of coalition, (iii) increased information load, and (iv) mutual awareness among participants that they are engaged in a common enterprise (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 65). Their interactionist view of social action has served as further inspiration to the present argument.

13 Chayes & Chayes 1998, Haggard & Simmons 1987, Hasenclever et al. 2000, Sprinz 1999, Sanwal 2004, Weiss & Jacobson 1998, Young 1989

flourished in the 1970s and 1980s but its key tenets continue to hold sway today.¹⁴ Indeed, the terms international institutions and international regimes are, for better or worse, frequently used interchangeably. The regime concept, famously defined by Krasner as “sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors’ expectations converge in a given area of international relations,”¹⁵ has informed a wealth of empirical and theoretical work. Because environmental problems are prone to involve more than one nation and environmental regimes have therefore flourished since the mid-1980s, global environmental politics scholars have been especially prolific in this area of research. Indeed, regimes have become such a widely observed and analyzed phenomenon that they sometimes come close to being reified in the same way that states often are.¹⁶

Regimes do not emerge out of nowhere, but explanations of regime formation hinge on perspectives of governance. Neorealists (using anarchy as the guiding metaphor for governance) see regime formation as the outcome of power relations, neoliberalists (using markets or pluralism) as a function of interest constellations, and cognitivists (using networks) as a function of social knowledge and learning skillfully used by what are sometimes called norm entrepreneurs. Oran Young identifies two main approaches to explaining regime formation. On the one hand, utilitarians argue that rationalist, utility-maximizing states will enter into mutually beneficial institutional arrangement with other states whenever a “distinct contract zone or zone of agreement exists.” On the other hand, (neo-)realists assume that international regimes reflect the configuration of power in the relevant social system and that “arrangements come into existence when those possessing sufficient power take the necessary steps to create them.”¹⁷ More generally, Ernst Haas noted that “an international issue arises when the terms of interdependence are questioned by one or

14 E. Haas 1980, Ruggie 1975, Keohane & Nye 1977, Krasner 1983, Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986, Ruggie 1975

15 Krasner 1982:186

16 Arts 2000:521

17 Young 1989

more of the parties concerned, provided the weaker party succeeds in persuading the stronger to pay attention...Issues become visible, acquire names and places on agendas, elicit studies, and emerge as recurrent topics of discussion in national parliaments and interest groups.”¹⁸ Sometimes they spill over from domestic issues, sometimes they emerge from cross-border or global problems.

Compared to these general hypotheses on regime formation, much more work has sought to enumerate *types* of regimes and the conditions that favor them, with foundational studies carried out by such scholars as Ernst Haas, Oran Young, and Peter Haas. Neo-institutionalists, for instance, have pointed to the importance of joint gains, leadership, knowledge, integrative (non-zero sum) bargaining, and compliance mechanisms that make the successful functioning of a regime more likely.¹⁹ Recent writing has emphasized the role of issue framing, often by non-state actors, in ways that attract the attention of national governments and international policy makers.²⁰ A growing number of scholars have also looked at different kinds of linkages and conflicts between regimes and the aggregation of regimes into ‘regime complexes.’²¹ The issue of regime linkage will be revisited in the section outlining a relational view, where one of the arguments is that actors are constituted by their links to various regimes.

Studies of international regimes have at times been criticized for failing to examine in greater detail what really goes on inside them. In his examination of international institutions, for instance, Johnston has argued that “there are good reasons to ‘go micro’ and focus on the socialization of individuals, small groups, and, in turn, the effects of these agents on the

18 E. Haas 1980:362

19 Arts 2000:517

20 The term non-state actors used here includes such collective social actors as social movements, transnational social movement, transnational advocacy networks, transnational civil society, as well as the private sector firms and their representative associations. See also O’Neill et al. 2004.

foreign policy processes of states.”²² Analysis of global public spheres potentially does just that, but may thereby neglect how they form, evolve, and disappear. In this vein, Cochran proposes that first on the list of issues future work in the study of public spheres should analyze are “the processes whereby recognition of problematic situations, which lead to the formation of international publics, are either enhanced or frustrated.”²³ Her answer is to draw on Dewey, rather than Habermas, and argue for “a *functional* understanding of a public constituted by the shared affects of indirect consequences, as compared to a Habermasian, epistemological one.”²⁴ Dewey, in other words, anticipated the explanation by regime scholars that regimes would form where interdependence would create situations in which actors need to address unintended consequences collectively.

Discursive and behavioral practices in international organizational fields

The literature on international regimes and global public spheres tells us that such sites emerge when the consequences of complex interdependence among some actors or political units (usually states) create problems for which solutions are more effectively tackled as a collective *and* when the problems are recognized and acted upon by the right kinds of actors. To investigate further how such issue areas come into being, this section takes a closer look at the nature of interactions and their effects that facilitate cooperation. Its main argument, that social actors more often than not adhere to a logic of appropriateness (whether the actions prescribed by appropriateness are taken for granted or deliberated), is

21 For regime complexes, see Raustiala & Victor 2004, for issue linkages see Rosendal 2001a, 2001b, Selin & VanDeveer 2004, Young 1996. Interest in regime linkages is not entirely new. In a seminal article, Ernst Haas (1980) distinguishes between tactical, fragmented, and substantive linkage types. It is also worth noting that while there is a growing recognition of the need to apply a more sociological approach to the state, regime theory appears to head in the opposite direction.

22 Johnston 2001:507

23 Cochran 2002:546

24 Cochran 2002:536. For this reason Cochran prefers the term ‘international public spheres’ to ‘global public spheres’ to differentiate her pragmatist (Deweyan), rather than deliberative (Habermasian) approach to democracy. Whereas the latter stresses communicative action in the form of reasoned argumentation, the former emphasizes collaborative problem-solving.

not new. Nor is its related presumption that actors' interests, preferences and identities change, both as a result of endogenous and exogenous events. But to create the link between the formation of issue areas and a co-constitutive view of actors and policies that in turn allows us to view policies on the basis of organizational structure, it is necessary to canvas the ways in which discursive and behavioral practices in IOFs have been approached.

An international organizational field is the locus for shared substantive interests, institutions, organizations, procedures and channels of communication that make possible a dense web of behavioral and discursive interaction manifested in public spheres. "It is in institutions," Johnston argues, "where the interaction of activists, so-called norm entrepreneurs, is most likely, and where social conformity pressures are most concentrated. Institutions often have corporate identities, traits, missions, normative cores, and official discourses at odds with realpolitik axioms, indeed at odds with the socialization pressures that many realists argue come with being sovereign, insecure actors operating in anarchy."²⁵ Global public sphere theorists such as Thomas Risse, posit that in spite of arguments to the contrary, international relations does take place in 'common lifeworlds,' one of the preconditions of communicative action, such as in issue-areas heavily regulated by international regimes and organizations, such as trade, human rights, or the environment.²⁶ In their view, international regimes provide a locale for the transnational exchange of reasons and opinion formation, a "practical foothold" and potential infrastructure for cosmopolitan democracy.²⁷ In his writing on transnational democracy, Dryzek goes so far as to claim that the sources of governance are discursive since because "discourses are social as well as personal, they act as sources of order by coordinating the behavior of the individuals who

25 Johnston 2001:508

26 Risse 2000:15

27 Bohman 1999:500. There is some debate among scholars drawing on Habermasian notions of deliberative democracy over whether international diplomacy meets the strict requirements for communicative action. Mitzen (2005) argues that Habermasians find it difficult to see communicative action in international regime politics because their preoccupation with the need to contain communicative instability leads them to the separation of order from legitimation (two-step reasoning).

subscribe to them.”²⁸ The point is that the more dense the webs of interaction in such social contexts, the more likely that norms are created and maintained, actors socialized, and interests and identities shaped in the process through social learning.²⁹ There is considerable debate about access to international IOFs, particularly for non-state actors. While it is true that many diplomatic encounters continue to be carried on behind closed doors, empirical work has shown that non-governmental organizations, private sector firms, and scientific communities consistently manage to influence the direction of negotiation.³⁰ This is especially true when the full range of channels of influence from face-to-face to internet-based mobilization is recognized.

The effect of interaction in IOFs is that individual and collective actors, constantly confronted with new information and called to public action on a growing list of items, rarely have the means to consider the costs and benefits of all available options as the proverbial rational utility maximizer would. Instead, they follow a norm of appropriateness by falling back on internalized norms of behavior that have previously been learned through socialization. Different social influence tools, such as backpatting, opprobrium or shaming, social liking, or status maximization, reinforce such norms, especially when their effects are visible to observers “in the sense that outsiders are aware of meetings of more than two participants, and in which discussions are premised on nominal equality.”³¹ Along the same

28 Dryzek 1999:34. He defines a discourse as “shared set of assumptions and capabilities embedded in language that enables its adherent to assemble bits of sensory information that come their way into coherent wholes.” It is worth noting that Dryzek’s definition of discourse shares a close conceptual affinity with the concept of ‘frames,’ which plays an important role in social movement theory and has increasingly been used in international relations via the study of transnational social movements (e.g. Khagram et al. 2002) and advocacy coalitions (e.g. Keck and Sikkink 1998)

29 There is also some debate over the source of learning. Whereas Risse and others drawing on Habermas argue that a ‘logic of arguing’ (Risse 2000) is at play, Checkel (2001), Johnston (2001), and others argue that persuasion, rather than deliberation “does the heavy lifting.” Johnston (2001:493) notes that “it is not obvious why, from the perspective of actually doing empirical research on socialization in IR, one should focus on Habermas to the neglect of a very rich research tradition on persuasion in communications theory, social psychology, and political socialization.”

30 E. Haas (1980) pointed out more than twenty-five years ago that appointees and staff at national ministries and agencies have always had various levels of direct and indirect contact with counterparts in other countries, international or non-governmental organizations, and private sector firms and associations

31 Mitzen 2005:411

lines, Johnston notes that in order for social influence to work, there needs to exist “an intersubjectivist normative consensus about what ‘good’ behavior looks like” *and* actions need to be public and observable.³² Mitzen lists three “forum effects” of publicity: drawing on Elster,³³ when in public even selfish actors will want to appear impartial and fair and so will generalize their interest claims and argue impartially; over time, a norm of publicity develops by which speakers feel they must make their reasons available to others; and public reason develops as frequently invoked arguments become shared norms. The forum effects, Mitzen argues, cause the linking of order and legitimization as gradually institutionalizing norms of argumentation and behavior stabilize expectations and as public reason begins to legitimate international outcomes.

The duality of actors and regimes

The view of actors whose interests and identities can change through interaction is now only one step away from a dialectical perspective of international organizational fields. From such a perspective, the norms of appropriateness are intersubjectivist building blocks that are constantly instantiated through the behavioral and discursive activities of participating actors. In the words of Alexander Wendt, a constructivist who has widely written about agency and structure in international relations, “intersubjectivist structures give meaning to material ones, and it is in terms of meanings that actors act.”³⁴ Actors constitute regimes and vice versa in an iterative process, and collective identities may form as actors extend the boundaries of their Selves to include elements of Others.³⁵ Wendt notes that the identities of the actors in international society are determined, at least in part, by the character of the institutional settings in which they operate. On this account, the interests of individual

32 Johnston 2001

33 Elster 1995

34 Wendt 1994:389

35 O’Neill et al. 2004, Arts 2001

actors, which are derived from their identities, are shaped in large part by the nature of international society treated as a set of constitutive institutional arrangements.”³⁶

Whereas Wendt has written about international politics more generally, Arts has proposed a dialectical regime model.³⁷ He proposes to view the international system as a social system that is stabilized by issue-specific regimes and a distribution of capabilities, which “co-determine human behaviour in international relations and politics, but are created – partly intentionally, partly unintentionally – through human action in international relations and politics at the same time.”³⁸ Although regimes help stabilize the systems, the structure of the international system needs to be continuously reproduced in political and social action, thereby opening the possibility of intentional or unintentional change. The players in this context “are the historical product of the international system, just as the system is the historical product of the activities of its constitutive elements across time and space; a dialectic process, which produces and is mediated by specific rules and resources.”³⁹

Writing on global public spheres applies a structurationist view insofar as communicative action presupposes that human agents are considered knowledgeable and capable, able to reflexively monitor the course of action and on that basis contemplate appropriate courses of action, hence change their behavior and thereby alter the structure. In this light, public sphere scholars drawing on Habermas also accept March and Olson’s arguments in favor of a norm of appropriateness, yet concur with Risse that there is a significant difference between norm-guided and norm-oriented behavior, the latter permitting reflection and giving rise to reasoned argumentation.

Before moving to the next section, it may be appropriate to summarize the argument thus far. To recall, the aim of this paper is to propose a relational approach to international

36 Wendt 1999 in Young 2002

37 Arts, as well as others who draw on Giddens, prefer the term structurationist to dialectical

38 Arts 2000:527

39 Arts 2000:529

(environmental) governance that permits the analysis of policies on the basis of organizational constellations. It has commenced this task with a selective review of the concepts of international regimes and global public spheres as the primary sites (what I have referred to as international organizational fields or IOFs) in which social actors address collective problems warranting international collaboration because individual action is either too costly, ineffective or both. In IOFs, action is motivated by a norm of appropriateness, which helps to socialize actors and over time creates, recreates, and reinforces preferences, interests, and identities. These actors are not viewed as cultural dupes. Global public sphere theorists drawing on Habermasian notions of deliberative democracy as well as constructivist regime scholars point out that (collective) human agency entails the capability to reflect on the consequences of one's action and change direction if deemed necessary. This view in turn requires a dialectic ontology in which IOF participants are constrained and enabled by their material, discursive, and behavioral environment at the same time as they constantly recreate that environment through their actions. Since a large share of collective action is codified in policies (which aggregate to form part the structural environment), it becomes possible to develop a view of actors and policies as mutually constitutive. Whereas the classic policy cycle assumes that organizations follow policies (for instance, an international secretariat is not established until a framework convention is signed), a dialectical view turns this assumption on its head, or rather, complements the coin with its other side. The specific contours of this argument will become clearer after the next two sections, which introduce key insights from the policy network literature and advance a relational view, respectively.

Policy Networks

The transfer to the international realm of domestic political science concepts, as the previous section attempted to show, is commonplace. Although the international system

differs in significant ways from domestic contexts, practice and theory has steadily rendered the boundary more permeable. In what is now a common story, international institutions have gradually assumed greater leverage state and non-state actors, material power increasingly shares the stage with a wide variety of norm-related social influence tools, and national sovereignty and legitimacy are slowly undermined by global flows of people, capital, ideas, and environmental externalities. As a result, the feasibility of applying ideas from domestic politics to the international system has greatly expanded. One such set of ideas that has until now made few inroads in international relations and the study of global environmental governance concerns policy networks. The network concept has of course been used extensively in the literature. Yet conceptual and methodological insights from the policy network literature, such as the influence of actor composition on policy outcomes or the use of actor-event interfaces, are few and far between. This section identifies a number of themes from the literature on policy networks, with a specific focus on its dialectical and relational variants.⁴⁰ It also refers to scholars of international regimes and global public spheres whose arguments have implicitly touched on these themes.

From whirlpools to policy networks

Political scientists have analyzed policy networks under a range of names, including whirlpools, triangles and iron triangles, sloppy hexagons, webs, issue networks, sub-governments, policy communities, epistemic communities, advocacy coalitions, and policy networks.⁴¹ Policy network approaches emerged in reaction to pluralist, corporatist and Marxist models of interest group intermediation. They posit that policy making occurs in a

40 This and the next section make extensive use of a paper presented by the author at the 2005 Western Political Science Association in Oakland, CA, March 17-19 (Balsiger 2005)

41 For whirlpools, see Griffiths (1939), for triangles Cater (1964), for iron triangles Ripley and Franklin (1984), for sloppy hexagons Jones (1979), for webs Peters (1986), for issue networks Heclo (1978), for sub-governments McFarland (1987), for policy communities Richardson and Jordan (1979), for epistemic communities Haas (1992), for advocacy coalitions Sabatier (1988), and for policy networks Jordan (1990)

setting of close relationships between interest groups and governmental agencies. Scholars of these dynamics typically differentiate between a North American and a European lineage.⁴² The former emerged from US political and organizational science of the 1950s and 1960s and emphasizes “regular contacts between individuals within interest groups, bureaucratic agencies and government which provide the basis of a sub-government.”⁴³ This lineage gave rise to notions of agency capture and iron triangles, consisting of congressional committees, administrative agencies, and producer-oriented interest groups, to represent situations of extremely close and closed relations among key public and private actors. Heclo already contested the existence of iron triangles in the late 1970s, arguing that they were becoming replaced by more loosely structured “issue networks.”⁴⁴ More recently, Peters concurred that the strength of iron triangles may have been exaggerated for some time and that they are no longer able to restrict access to the policy process in the way they once could.⁴⁵

Scholars from different disciplines pointed to the rapid expansion of interest groups lobbying national governments in many parts of the world in the 1970s, which allowed the influence of a far greater number of stakeholders and the constant generation of new policy criticisms and ideas. One of the reasons for this expansion was the growing size and scope of government, illustrated for instance by the passage of environmental legislation that allowed civil society groups greater access to the policy process. Whereas early contenders were based on resource dependence perspectives, however, the advocacy coalition and epistemic community variants emphasized the importance of norms and ideas. In the advocacy coalition framework, policy change and policy-oriented learning is explained as a gradual process involving the adjustment of positions on policy means and, more rarely, causal and principled core beliefs embedded in policy goals.⁴⁶ These and related perspectives frequently point to

42 Marsh & Rhodes 1992

43 Marsh 1998

44 Heclo 1978

45 Peters 1998

46 Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993

the important role of the media and policy analysts in the production and dissemination of policy-related knowledge. Baumgartner and Jones, for instance, argue that policy change is affected by changes in “policy images,” which denote “how public policies are discussed in public and in the media.”⁴⁷

The second strand of policy network approaches developed among European scholars, primarily in Great Britain, Germany, and the Netherlands. The British in particular argued that their alternative rested on the observation that the country's legislature plays a smaller role in policy making than in the United States. Correspondingly, although Rhodes and colleagues have adopted the network concept, they emphasize that their work owes more to the (largely German) literature on inter-organizational theory.⁴⁸ The German and British models share the view that societies are characterized by functional differentiation that give rise to policy (sub-)sectors in which private organizations have an important role in policy formulation. Whereas the British school views the policy network approach as a model of interest group intermediation, however, the German school is more ambitious and argues that policy networks constitute a new form of governance that is contrasted with hierarchies and markets.

Rhodes and colleagues emphasize the structural relations between political institutions as the crucial element in a policy environment, as well as the sectoral rather than the sub-sectoral level.⁴⁹ A rival approach emanating from the work of Wilks and Wright considers personal relations among small groups of political actors as the locus of policy networks.⁵⁰ In this respect, their model is similar to US studies, which mostly focus on the micro-level and personal relations between key actors. Reflecting the resource dependence perspective adopted by Rhodes and colleagues, Klijn characterizes the policy network approach by three

47 Baumgartner and Jones 1991

48 Hanf & O'Toole 1992, also for links to implementation studies

49 Marsh 1998

50 Wilks and Wright 1987

main features: (i) actors are dependent on each other for the means to reach their goals; (ii) policy is the outcome of interaction among groups whose power primarily depends on the resources they have and the importance of these resources in the policy process; and (iii) patterns of relations and rules of conduct are stabilized through the development of institutions that guide policy networks.⁵¹

Recent writing on policy network is characterized by a number of trends. Reflecting the differences between relatively more open issue networks and relatively more closed policy networks/communities, there has been a discussion on whether the two have historically succeeded each other. In their analysis of British agricultural policy making, for instance, Jordan, Maloney, and McLaughlin argue that while the image of a policy community may have been accurate in the past, the policy sector has become fragmented and competitive, with a broad array of actors vying for influence.⁵² In this assessment, the authors characterize a process that Heclo argues took place in the United States in the 1970s.

The policy network literature has also tended to focus on a single policy issue area or relationships within a single government organization. Peters has argued that the real world of politics is not only much more complex, but if, as has been argued, policy coordination and coherence are becoming increasingly significant questions for government, then focusing so heavily on individual policy sectors may be counterproductive.⁵³ It is particularly counterproductive, Peters argues, because network analysis is supposed to be useful in the analysis of inter-organizational coordination. Similarly, Jordan and Maloney argue that “once policy community is interpreted as a (mainly) microlevel arrangement, the probability of intercommunity conflicts increases [...] it is clear that in many high profile political episodes, the politics is between, rather than within, policy communities.”⁵⁴

51 Klijn 1996

52 Jordan et al 1994

53 Peters 1998

54 Jordan and Maloney 1997

Another trend in the policy networks literature emerged in response to criticisms that it paid insufficient attention to the larger political environment. Marsh and Smith developed a dialectical model aimed at underscoring the mutual relationship between actors and networks, between networks and their larger context, and between network and policy outcomes.⁵⁵ This model addresses two key criticisms of the policy network model, namely its weakness in explaining change and its tendency to focus on single sectors. Although Rhodes had previously identified processes that affected policy networks and can act as sources of change, including an unstable external support systems, growth of the welfare state, extension of functional differentiation and professionalization, and development of a social structure characterized by multiple (non-class) cleavages, systematic explanations of change have been rare.

It should be apparent by now that the policy network literature entails a series of ideas relevant to the context of IOFs. First, the literature views policy-making as an undertaking that occurs in functionally differentiated issue areas. Indeed, most domestic issue areas find their equivalent in international regimes. Second, these issue areas are stabilized through the development of institutions consisting of rules, norms, and decision-making procedures. Third, in contrast to regime theory perspectives that primarily address the role of states, policy network approaches recognize the full range of state and non-state actors. Moreover, advocacy coalition and domestic epistemic community perspectives afford norms and ideas a central role. Fourth, although some policy network scholars' emphasis on face-to-face interactions echoes deliberative encounters in global public spheres, others point out that policy network participants may be linked through structural relations among political institutions. The significance of this point will soon become clear, as it mirrors an important distinction network theory makes between direct ties among actors and indirect ties on the basis of so-called equivalence. Fifth, the trend in the policy network literature to move

55 Marsh and Smith 2000

beyond single issue areas is also seen in the recent moves to extend the international regime literature to regime complexes.⁵⁶ Sixth, in what is perhaps the most explicit link between policy networks and the subject of this paper, the German school considers policy networks a new form of governance in its own right.

Duality in policy networks

The policy network literature has begun to incorporate ontological considerations. Whereas Marsh and Smith's dialectical turn is a recent event, Laumann and Knoke's landmark *The Organizational State* established a conceptual and methodological standard that has been extremely difficult to match.⁵⁷ In their comparison of the U.S. health and energy sectors in terms of the influence of relationships among private and governmental organizations under the Carter Administration, the authors view the state as "an autonomous social formation whose strategies emerge from the basic organizational imperatives of coping with environmental uncertainties, resource scarcities, and socio-legal constraints."⁵⁸ Furthermore, they apply what IR scholars recognize as a constructivist conception of the policy domain when they argue that "the boundaries between actors in the policy domain and the more peripheral members of a subsystems are never rigidly drawn...On the contrary, membership in a policy domain is a continuing collective social construction by the domain actors."⁵⁹ The authors' analysis builds on a view of policy domains as systems of action consisting of actors engaging in events (defined as decision-making junctures). Noting that while much work has focused on the description of actors, they proceed to establish a dialectical framework for analyzing actors and events simultaneously. "We basically contend,

56 Raustiala & Victor 2004

57 In a review of Laumann and Knoke, Burstein (1990) argues that the analysis may get less attention than it deserves because of the authors' call on political scientists and sociologists to abandon what they consider useless doctrinal debates over pluralist, Marxist and other approaches, the demanding nature of the theoretical and methodological approach, and the amount of new jargon.

58 Laumann & Knoke 1987:8

59 Laumann & Knoke 1987:12

first, that the systematic linkages among issues have important consequences for the politics of their resolution and, second, that such linkages are structurally arranged according to the ways in which organizations form constituencies for the various issues.”⁶⁰ In this framework, actor constellations are shaped by the events in which they participate and the position they take in these events, while events and event outcomes are influenced by the structure of event participants. Laumann and Knoke find, among other things, that rather than a consistent line-up of actors on the basis of ideological cleavages, “highly fluid and easily recombinant alliances” as a result of highly specialized policy-making domains characterized by complex side issues and payoffs for various actors.⁶¹ In his criticism of utilitarian models of regime bargaining, Young noted that “although it would certainly be helpful in analytic terms, it is seldom feasible to collapse the resultant negotiations into two-sided bargaining processes by grouping the players into two coalitions or blocs.”⁶²

While it would be an exaggeration to claim that the international regimes and global public sphere literature has not used the above ideas at all, they have not so far been pursued in as systematic a manner as in Laumann and Knoke. Views of models of governance (and, more prescriptively, proposals for them) have similarly appropriated networks as a metaphor. Peter Haas, for instance, proposes reform along the lines of a networked model involving “the performance of a variety of discrete functions by multiple actors, whose interactive effects in practice can yield more effective global coordination and performance of major governance functions.”⁶³ He refers to such a model as multilevel governance: “the best institutional structure for dealing with complex and uncertain policy environments is loose, decentralized, dense networks of institutions and actors that are able to quickly relay information, and provide sufficient redundancies in the performance of functions so that the elimination or

60 Laumann & Knoke 1987:274

61 Laumann & Knoke 2987:41

62 Young 1989:360

63 Haas 2004:1

inactivity by one institution does not jeopardize the entire network.”⁶⁴ Risse states that “nonhierarchical and network like international institutions characterized by a high density of mostly informal interactions should provide the structural conditions in international relations to allow for discursive and argumentative processes,”⁶⁵ and Dryzek views that transnational civil society networks as the most appropriate institutional form for global governance without government. Ernst Haas’s analysis of issue linkages and regimes, on the other hand, points to the nature and role of different types of actors in regime negotiations – rationalists, pragmatists, eclectics, and skeptics – and develops a number of hypotheses about how the composition of the negotiation body may influence outcomes.⁶⁶

The Duality of Organizations and Policies

The main basic building blocks for the main argument of this paper are now in place. A look at the constellation of actors within a regime should allow us to say something about the nature of that regime. Looking beyond single regimes, we should be able to determine the likelihood of issue area emergence from the configuration of actors in a given IOF or set of IOFs. The problem then becomes one of capturing the structure of actors in such a way as to be able to formulate hypotheses about regime dynamics. According to pragmatist philosopher George Herbert Mead (1938), “the meanings of phenomena lie in their embeddedness in relationships.” The main difficulty in applying this view is that causal arrows run in both directions between dependent and independent variables. One way of dealing with this is to track changes over time. Another is to make use of a special type of social network analysis, so-called affiliation networks.

Affiliation networks are grounded in the theoretical importance of individuals’

64 Haas 2004:7. One such effort evolves around the United Nations Global Compact (Ruggie 2001)

65 Risse 2000:15

66 Haas 1980

memberships in collectivities, a notion developed by the German sociologist Georg Simmel.⁶⁷ Simmel argued that individuals were part of multiple social circles and that the social identity of an individual was constituted by the intersection of the social circles to which the individual belongs. Cederman and Daase remind us that in contrast to “Durkheim’s structuralist invocation of ‘social facts,’ Georg Simmel proposed a dynamic framework of *sociation* (*Vergesellschaftung*) that closes the loop between agency and interaction.⁶⁸ Instead of privileging either actor or structure as the ontological starting point, his notion of *sociation* traces the production and reproduction of both actors and structures. In Helle’s words, ‘in society, a formative process leads to the emergence and change of social constructs and the living reality, which forms the process, is the dynamic of interaction.’⁶⁹ Kadushin elaborated on the concept of social circles as a social entity without a formal membership list, rules, or leadership, an unobservable construct that must be inferred from behavioral similarities among groups of individuals.⁷⁰

Affiliation networks are relational in three ways.⁷¹ First, the networks simply show how actors relate to events. Second, they show how actors relate to each other. Joint participation in events provides opportunities for actors to interact and increases the probability that direct pairwise ties will develop. It further entails common courses of action that facilitate coordination, collaboration, and learning, and facilitates the enactment of rules and norms. Some caution is needed in interpreting network situations. Two actors who participate in the same event need not necessarily be affiliated or even know each other personally. The propensity to develop an association depends on the number of participants,

67 Simmel 1950

68 Cederman and Daase 2003:11

69 Helle 1988:106

70 Kadushin 1966. In the classic and most widely cited application of affiliation networks, Davis, Gardner, and Gardner (1941) used this notion to study circles of women activists in the American South. The authors developed a matrix consisting of 18 women and their participation in 14 events. By gradually reordering the rows and columns, they were able to identify a cluster of women with a tendency to attend the same events and who thus shared commonalities above and beyond those connecting all 18 women.

71 Wasserman & Faust 1994

as well as the nature of the event. Some affiliation network situations can involve very dense, formal, and lasting relations; others may be informal social gatherings or fleeting one-time events.⁷² In network analysis, actors who are characterized by the same pattern of ties to other actors or events are said to belong to the same equivalence class. As noted earlier, affiliation by equivalence is a central concept in the study of social position or social role. In other words, although ties identified in affiliation networks may not automatically entail personal or inter-organizational relations, they do situate actors in clusters of a similarity that can scarcely escape their attention.

The third and most important relational dimension of affiliation networks says that when an actor participates in more than one event, a linkage is established between the events (the more intuitive flip side consists of the links established between actors when they attend the same events). Because of this property of affiliation networks that links both actors through events and events through actors, Breiger has referred to such networks as *dual* networks.⁷³ To extend these insights to the discussion of policy networks implies that networks can be seen as constituted by the actors that participate in them, while the actors are constituted by the networks in which they participate. Both shape each other, so changes in one will lead to changes in the other. Networks change when the composition of actors shifts. At the same time, networks structure the possibilities for action of their constituents. In short, affiliation networks permit the simultaneous examination of the pattern of relations among actors *and* the connectedness of events.

The use of affiliation networks offers a methodological advantage that is often overlooked. In contrast to personal ties between individuals (Wasserman & Faust refer to such data as one-mode data⁷⁴), which generally have to be assessed through interviews, affiliation network data (called two-mode data in reference to persons and events as the

72 Faust 2005

73 Breiger 1990

74 Wasserman & Faust 1994

respective modes) allows less obtrusive data gathering techniques.⁷⁵

Potential applications and methods

When we apply the concept of affiliation networks to international governance, the following picture emerges. State and non-state actors with collective identities have a scope of organizational interest that is manifested in the events they participate in, the programs and projects they undertake, and the policies they support. An organization's collective identity can be said to emerge at the intersection of the events (seen here as the aggregation of their discursive and behavioral involvements, or social circles) in which that organization participates. Interest scopes can be defined substantively (climate change, biodiversity, whaling, etc.), territorially (local, regional, global), institutionally (market-oriented, community-based, etc.), or along any other criteria commonly used. They are likely to change over time, but organizations will try to find a balance between maintaining credibility among constituents, such as funders or voters, and retaining the flexibility to change orientation or join new coalitions as opportunities arise. As global public sphere scholars have pointed out, 'publicity' is an important dimension of communicative action. Accordingly, organizational positions on issues within their scope of interest can be assessed from press statements, websites, annual reports, as well as inferred from actions.

The circles of interest thus established vary in size, depending on how wide or narrow an organization views its mandate. Some collective actors, such as Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance or Environment are legally required to have a broad scope. Others, such as single interest trade associations may have a very specialized outlook. Although environmental concerns are by nature cross-sectoral, many organizations may specialize only in specific niches. Due to the multiplicity of actors involved in global governance, these

⁷⁵ Everett & Borgatti 2005. Marsden (2005) provides the most up-to-date summary of biases inherent in interview-derived relational data, of which there are many.

social circles overlap, creating a web of links between organizational identities. The resulting organizational landscape is constantly reproduced through the actions of its constituents, creating the “highly fluid and easily recombinant alliances” Laumann and Knoke remind us to expect.

Conversely, international organizational fields are stabilized through recurring participation by state and non-state actors. Depending on the particular set of participants and the configuration of their scopes of interest, issue areas may be sustained for long periods of time. Inevitably, however, IOFs shift as new organizations enter the scene, established ones disappear or change focus, new knowledge alters the parameters of recognized problems or gives rise to novel challenges. Through constant interaction at myriad encounters common in today’s governance arrangements, social learning takes place and interests, identities, preferences change. Wendt alluded to these dynamics in his analysis of collective identity in international politics when arguing that “the structures of regional or global international systems constitute interaction contexts that either inhibit or facilitate the emergence of dynamics of collective identity formation, and as such they play an indirect causal role ... Intersubjective systemic structures consist of the shared understandings, expectations, and social knowledge embedded in international institutions and threat complexes, in terms of which states define (some of) their identities and interests.”⁷⁶ Changing patterns of collective identities in turn modify the structure of social circles and their overlaps. Different sets of actors may converge around new issue areas and enable the development of new policies. Haas anticipated such shifts long ago when he said that “the linking of issues that remained separate in earlier periods can be interpreted as a kind of learning...But learning is but another word for reinterpreting one’s interests.”⁷⁷ Issue linking may be deliberate, motivated by a variety of reasons (tactical or not), and a mark of individual or collective leadership by

76 Wendt 1994:389

77 Haas 1980:369

“international entrepreneurs are actors [...] skilled in inventing new institutional arrangements and brokering the overlapping interests of parties concerned with a particular issue-area.”⁷⁸

Social networks tools can shed light on the emergence of issue areas, including measures that capture the location of specific actors inside the network of IOF participants, and the linkages between issues that are created on the basis of that actor’s scope of interest. Building a matrix of organizations and their positions on specific policy debates creates the foundation for calculating such measures. For instance, IOFs sustained primarily by single issue organizations will be less likely to give rise to new policies than IOFs in which organizations with broad scopes of interest interact.

The use of this methodology provides both retrospective and predictive leverage. On the one hand, the analyst can revisit the emergence of currently or previously existing IOFs and investigate the structure of organizations and their positions on related issues prior to and up to the time of IOF formation. For instance, a comparison between the biodiversity and desertification regimes may reveal that the relatively greater emphasis on development of the latter is due to the nature of the organizations involved in related issues. On the other hand, the same approach can be used to help understand the likelihood that issue areas currently not addressed by international policies will become institutionalized and acted upon.

Although social network theorists will be the first to point out that relational data is extremely hard to come by, this paper may have made a modest contribution to the conceptual and methodological tool box that would make such studies possible.

[Conclusion and more specific examples to be added]

78 Young 1989:373

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