

Global Public Policy Networks:
An emerging innovation in
POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION

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1. Introduction to GPPNs

The 1990s were a time of expanding dialogue around environmental issues and a time when the concept of sustainable development - though interpreted in a range of ways - became widely utilized. It was also a time of rapid economic growth and increasing concentration of market power in the large corporate sector. And it is the time when information and communication technology exploded into the mainstream. The combination of these factors created a backdrop for the emergence of a key global public policy network – the Global Reporting Initiative – in which the free-flow of information and the rapidity of communication enabled interested parties to scrutinize corporate activities much more closely, while at the same time it provided incentives to these businesses for voluntary disclosure.

The Global Reporting Initiative arose to fill a fundamental gap in information - namely, the gap between the corporate sector and its pool of suppliers of corporate sustainability information, and those demanding this information, such as investors, consumers, human rights groups and environmental organizations. In doing so, the GRI essentially activated a “latent network” of actors unaware of their need for one another, and stepped into the critical role of harmonizing and responding to these existing needs. Over its brief six-year lifetime, the GRI has seen a sequence of resounding successes, from the participatory development of its Reporting Guidelines to the establishment of a permanent Secretariat, to the use of its Guidelines (as of early 2003) by 253 organizations in 26 countries. Today, it serves as the central platform for voluntary reporting by organizations around the world on the economic, environmental, and social impacts of their activities.

This narrative, and many others like it, provides an example of a new phenomenon that has emerged at the global level. Beyond the confines of traditional governmental activity, a quiet sea change has taken place over the past decade. International networks and coalitions have sprung up around the globe to draw attention to fundamental issues of justice, equity and fair play, which were normally considered as the reserve of conventional political activity. They have enhanced the participation of actors and voices that were hitherto excluded from discussions; complemented and expanded the technical and political capacities of governments, especially in the South, where they were already stretched beyond limits. They have worked to introduce collaborative efforts aimed at devising consensus-based and more sustainable policies. They have served to communicate the text and implications of various decisions in more accessible ways, thus enhancing both transparency and ownership.

This phenomenon has many features, and accordingly, it has been described in the literature under a variety of names: global social movements, global civil society, the global NGO movement, and global public policy networks (GPPNs). The different descriptions illuminate slightly different characteristics. Some stress its nature as a social movement, which opens up a

new arena for political action and mobilizes multiple stakeholders. Others focus on the motivation behind the movement, and emphasize the non-state or voluntary basis of actions involved. Still others are struck by its innovative organization, and highlight the network structure that distinguishes it from earlier initiatives. Finally, others are concerned with its impacts, and accentuate its role in public policy formulation. We have chosen to work with the last two of these characteristics, not because we view them as being superior to the others - indeed, all of them capture an important component of the new reality. It is rather because the goal of our work is precisely to draw lessons from this experience and thereby assist existing and new networks to become more effective in their designated activity, namely influencing global public policy formulation.

GPPNs, as a whole, have already had an indelible impact on the global public policy arena. They link a broad range of groups interested in an equally broad range of problems, ranging from landmines to labor rights to hydroelectric dams, and from standards for business performance to business associations. While the experiences and approaches of different groups are often distinct from one another, they share a common origin and a number of core characteristics.

The goal of this chapter is first, to explore the context, origins, and structure of the GPPNs, and second, and in particular to highlight the factors that have enabled such networks to develop and coalesce and fill the gaps in global policy-making. Section 1 examines the conditions that have served to limit the effectiveness of traditional policy-making processes. Section 2 provides an overview of the function of GPPNs, the role that they have come to play in policy-formulation, and their impacts in major policy domains. Finally, Section 4 develops tentative criteria for the definition and effectiveness of various networks.

1.1 History and Context

When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion.

...Ethiopian Proverb

Global public policy networks can be defined as formal or informal coalitions of organizations and individuals that hold as a central goal the development of new norms, visions, analyses, methods of collecting and disseminating knowledge, and ways of operating that can directly

impact global public policy. GPPNs engage directly in global policy-making arenas and/or actively fill the void in global policy left by traditional mechanisms.

To achieve their objectives, GPPNs serve a number of innovative bridging functions, spanning the following divides:

- sectoral - i.e., between the three organizational sectors of business, government and civil society
- geopolitical - i.e., between North and South
- experiential - i.e., between analytical expertise and practical experience
- professional or disciplinary - e.g. between natural and social sciences, or between economics and politics
- ideological - e.g. between trade and sustainable development, or environment and development
- scale - global, national, and local
- form and size - e.g., between large and small NGOs, or between TNCs, SMEs and livelihood activities

While they most often involve civil society and government sectors, GPPNs can also be tripartite in nature, involving for-profit business. In instances where all three sectors are involved, GPPNs can serve as a corrective force, balancing the influence of business with the expressed interests of civil society.

In order to maintain the momentum and responsiveness necessary to meet these goals, GPPNs are dynamic in both process and structure. They tend to be loose transnational alliances. In general, they rely upon structured informality and information technology, often in innovative ways, for building the “consensual knowledge” of an issue that essentially defines each GPPN (Reinicke and Deng, 2000).

GPPNs have emerged over the last two decades, most notably since the mid-1990s. Classic explanations of this phenomenon emphasize both push and pull factors, the former referring to improved communications and the strength of civil society broadly, and the latter to the manifest weaknesses of the system of global public policy formulation. Both of these are also closely associated with the process of globalization. The growth of GPPNs, by no coincidence, closely

shadows the tremendous expansion in size, scope and capacity witnessed in civil society - activists, academia, media, but most notably, the non-governmental organizations. It also appears to be related to and indeed in response to the vacuum in governance created by rapid globalization and the consequent erosion in legitimacy of traditional decision making institutions (especially nation-states) as well as traditional approaches to policy development. Much of the literature on GPPNs focuses on this second, pull factor.

1.1.1 Globalization

The term globalization has become a commonly applied label to a number of linked economic and social trends. It has generated a vast literature (see, e.g. Bauman, 1998; Friedman, 2000; Held *et al.*, 1999). Although the economic forms of globalization receive the most attention, with debate about trade flows and the comparative wealth of nations, globalization encompasses social, political, cultural, and technological trends as well. It is associated with a myriad of interactions, such as international travel for vacation or work, cultural exposure including movies, books, and even the ability to find foods and restaurants from around the world in all major cities, and increasing exchanges via telephone and the internet. It is also associated with a growing list of problems that demand more intense multi-national exchanges such as environmental degradation, health epidemics, and organized crime.

An authoritative text (Held *et al.*, 1999) describes the term as reflecting "...a widespread perception that the world is rapidly being moulded into a shared social space by economic and technological forces and that developments in one region of the world can have profound consequences for the life chances of individuals or communities on the other side of the world." This description raises images of increasing interconnectedness and networking as people and organizations interact across distances more frequently and intensely. Indeed, the authors go on to suggest four key variables for measuring globalization. These are the *extensivity* of global networks, i.e. the geographic reach of networks to people, organizations and communities; the *intensity* of global interconnectedness, i.e. the number of times and amount of information and goods that flow over the networks; the *velocity* of global flows, i.e. the speed of exchanges; and the *impact propensity* of global connectedness, i.e. the changes that result in daily life from the connections.

Yet, this does not imply a global consensus over the nature or even the significance of the underlying trends. Held *et al.*, (1999) distinguish between three schools of thought: hyperglobalizationists, skeptics, and transformationists. Hyperglobalizationists focus on economic logic as the driving force for change, and imply that not only are the trends inexorable and unresistable, but also that they are leading to a growing irrelevance of nation states. Skeptics argue, in contrast, that when viewed in historical context the current levels of integration or interaction are neither particularly significant nor especially consequential, although many in this category admit that the trends leading towards regionalization could be an appropriate focus of attention. Transformationalists view globalization not as a natural or inexorable process, but as something that is being shaped by and can be shaped by human action; they see current trends as driving the rapid reshaping of society, leading to fundamental transformation of power and structures.

In line with this last approach, GPPNs can be conceived of as intermediaries that are trying to influence the process of globalization in terms of its impacts and structures. Although the term GPPN includes skeptics and critics as well as protagonists, it is fair to say that notwithstanding their approval or criticism, all of them have to some degree become active agents of globalization. The consequence of their actions is not so much to “stop” globalization, as to tame and fashion it to work for the benefit of distinct human communities and human concerns.

As a broad societal development, globalization is associated with an equally broad range of linked impacts. Here, we remark briefly upon four such changes, which are especially relevant to the rise of GPPNs. These are the crisis of legitimacy of traditional decision making arrangements - especially, but not exclusively, nation states; the emergence of major gaps and weaknesses in global decision making processes; the rise in significance of non-state actors; and the growth in more integrative approaches to analysis and action.

1.1.2 Governance Crisis

A central impact of globalization is that social, economic, political, and environmental problems have changed in terms of their intricacy, geographic spread, and speed of onset. They defy the geographic boundaries that circumscribe traditional governmental responses. Local and national governments - limited to jurisdictional approaches - are unable to do more than address local

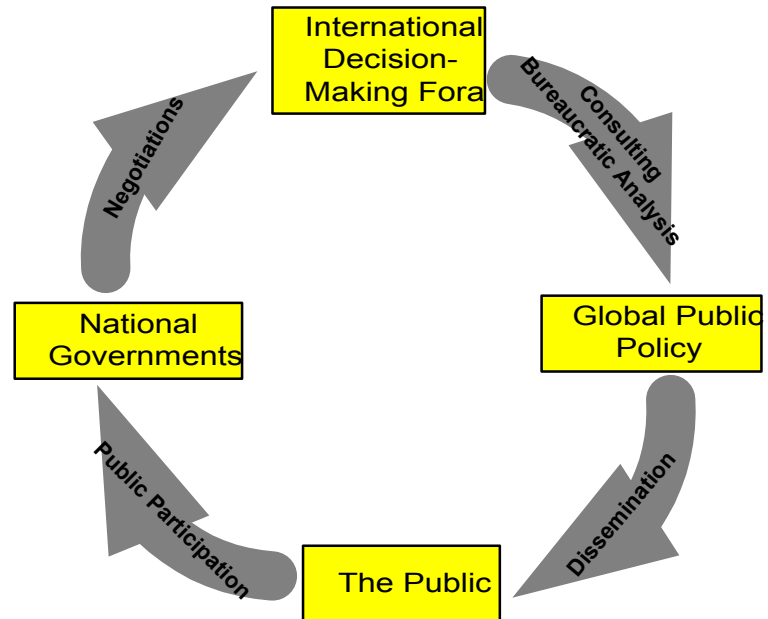
symptoms of a problem. As a result, many of these issues are today being discussed and decided at global levels, through intergovernmental negotiations, dispute resolution processes, formulation of norms and standards and other similar mechanisms. However, many governments are not adequately equipped for the negotiations or decision-making processes. Limitations among participants as well as deficiencies of the decision-making framework itself have served to disable the larger process and to impound effective global policy.

In other words, globalization has, on the one hand, weakened the ability of nation states to protect their economies and societies against the adverse impacts of exogenous shocks, and on the other hand, increased the range and number of problems for which a coordinated international response is required. This has created what some observers term a crisis of global governance, referring both to the weakness of global institutions to deal with the new problems, and the erosion in the legitimacy and effectiveness of national institutions to deal with the problems on their own (Friedman, 2000; Bauman, 1998).

Global governance is a concept of recent origin. True, it has antecedents, most notably the establishment of the United Nations and its subsidiary bodies (as well as its predecessor, the League of Nations). However, as is noted in the United Nations' own definitive document on the issue, the report of the Commission on Global Governance (*Our Global Neighbourhood*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), these institutions were created at a time when "nation-states, many of them imperial powers, were dominant. Faith in the ability of governments to protect citizens and improve their lives was strong.... Moreover, the state had few rivals. The world was not as closely integrated as it is today. The vast array of global firms and corporate alliances that has emerged was just beginning to develop. The huge global capital market, which today dwarfs even the largest national capital markets, was not foreseen. The enormous growth in people's concerns for human rights, equity, democracy, meeting basic needs, environmental protection, and demilitarization has today produced a multitude of actors who can contribute to governance" (pp. 3). In other words, the UN system was created to enable negotiations and agreements between nation-states, not for assuming the role of a global nation-state. The report goes on to argue that unless the UN system is reformed radically it will not be able to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

With regard to the emergence of GPPNs, the relevant issue is the impact of these developments on global public policy formulation - leaving aside for the moment the process of policy formation at national levels - which revolves mainly around the UN and its subsidiaries. Figure 1.1 provides a schematic description of the existing system, starting with individuals to national governments to international decision making forums. Traditionally, civil society actors and businesses were presumed to rely upon public participation in national political processes to make their voices heard. This stakeholder input is, in theory, channeled to the international policy-making process through negotiations among accountable and representative national governments. These inputs are aggregated and brought to a head in international decision-making forums--such as the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change (INC) established by the UN General Assembly in December 1990. These forums entail a process of negotiations between member states, and are often informed by international scientific or technical bodies. The policy options developed by governments either directly or through consultants recruited specifically for the purpose are converted into policy conclusions, which are disseminated back to the public arena through a variety of mechanisms. The views and concerns of the people are supposedly channeled into these decisions through the participating governments, which are presumed to represent and protect the rights of their citizens. The final decisions are communicated through normal UN channels, and by virtue of the ratification by member states, assumed to have broad ownership in the global society.

Figure 1.1 Traditional model of global public policy-making



1.1.3 Governance Gaps

The reality is very different. The exponential increase in the pace, complexity and interconnected nature of global activity has weakened the process of global decision-making - a system not long on its feet - and indeed, public policy-making in general. In particular, weaknesses have emerged in at least four key areas: *ethical, operational, participatory, and communications*.

While national politics are often required to reconcile broader ethical concerns with those based on expediency and self-interest, the global arena, dominated by instrumental approaches, remains largely unimpeded by such constraints, and there is little discourse over balancing what is possible with what is desirable. A major reason, of course, is the absence of organized political action at the global level, analogous to the role-played by political parties in linking the state with civil society at national levels. Take for instance, climate change. A founding - albeit highly generalized - ethical premise, led parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change to agree to curtail global emissions of greenhouse gases in accordance with the principles of inter- and intra-generational equity. Over time, however, this ethical foundation has given way almost entirely to efficiency considerations. In retrospect, the ethical concerns appear to have been incorporated mainly at the behest of or under pressure from non-state actors.

More generally, it can be argued that it is only on account of civil society actors - acting in a variety of forums and through a variety of methods - that ethical concerns have made an appearance in global discussions. Such actions are concerned as often about *who* should be at the decision-making table as about *what* should be discussed at that table. A prominent example is the so-called battle in Seattle, November 1999, where it was clear both inside the WTO Ministerial meeting - through the North-South¹ governmental discord - and outside - through the displays of resentment over growing transnational corporate control - that a shared moral ground for decision-making on international trade was not in place. However, the ethics gap is endemic in virtually every intergovernmental process, where mainly NGOs, independent academics, and parts of the media voice ethical concerns. It has, for example, led to sustained North-South disagreements over decision-making powers as well as allocation of costs and burden. Similar

¹ “Northern” will be used to refer to those countries sometimes called “industrial”, “wealthy”, or “developed”; “Southern” will refer to “developing”, “emerging market”, and “poor”. Of course these two categories ignore the great variety of categories possible, but provide an critical distinction for GPPN analysis.

rifts are responsible for the inability of Northern governments to agree on unified responses to recognized environmental problems, evidenced for example in the failure of the UNFCCC COP-6, at The Hague in November 2000.

A second gap pertains to the ability of government negotiators to absorb all the information needed for meaningful engagement in global decisions. The speed of emergence of global issues seldom allows the luxury of delayed action - many require instantaneous responses to complex sets of variables. Yet the same policy-makers implicated in such responses are also under pressure to think in the long-term and to bear in mind considerations such as intergenerational equity. The very complexity of emerging global problems requires a perspective that cuts across bureaucracies, disciplines and jurisdictions. The result has been that governments at all levels are incapable of effectively addressing a number of urgent public policy issues, creating what has come to be known as the *operational gap* in governance.

Third, the forces of economic and social liberalization, globalization and technological change have created another problem for governance - one that may threaten the very future of democratic institutions. Just as these influences have limited the effectiveness of policy-making, they have undermined traditional mechanisms for engaging civil society in public decisions, namely through conventional democratic process of election, representative decision-making, transparency and public accountability. Partly in response to such failure, new forms of involvement of civil society actors in public sector decision-making have emerged. These entail the growth of entities in the other two sectors - civil society and business. Today, the importance of these two groups for effective public policy cannot be denied. However, even for these groups, inadequate mechanisms exist through which they can communicate their views and provide input to public policy. This creates a dilemma for democratic institutions, namely that increasing numbers of interested individuals and organizations are finding that they have a decreasing impact on public policy outcomes. As a result, these institutions are becoming delegitimized in the eyes of their constituents (Reinicke and Deng, 2000). This *participatory gap* has already led to civil society disillusionment and a credibility crisis for certain multilateral institutions - as was brought out most forcefully at the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Seattle.

There is a final governance gap, perhaps best understood as originating from the dialogue and decisions of global forums. These forums produce policy decisions that aim for changes

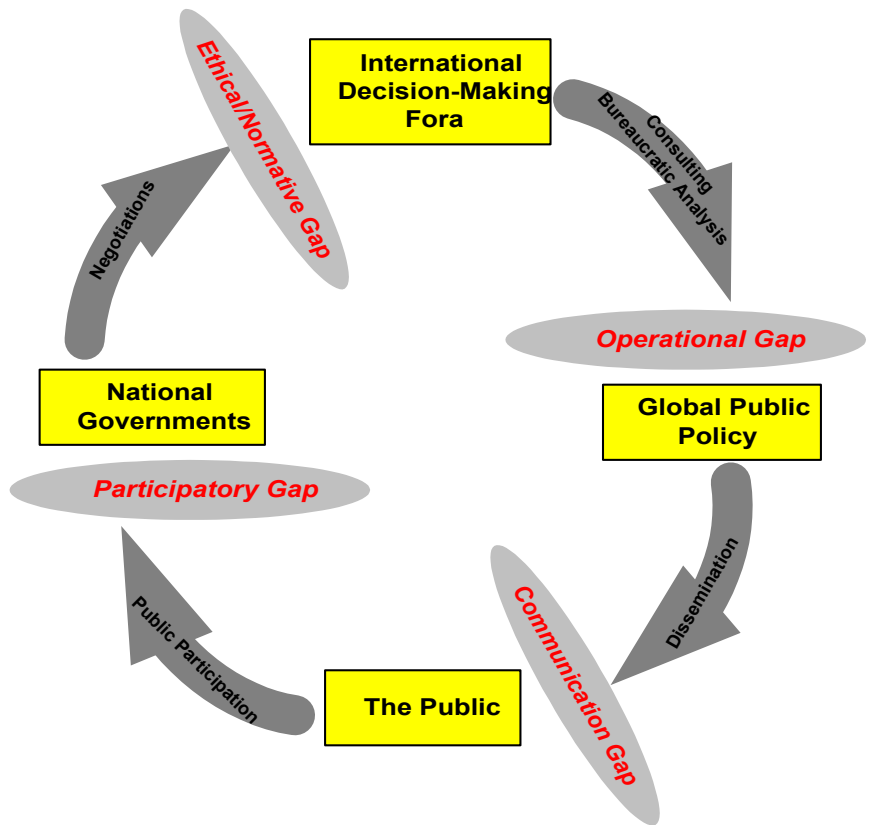
throughout the world. Wholesale adjustments in production processes, energy sources, land management, and labor standards, for example, can be created through implementation of international agreements. This implies first that the global policy decisions can have a profound impact on the general public and second, that the participation of stakeholders and the general public, reciprocally, is central to the implementation process. The history of these processes indicates, however, that effective channels of communication, as well as effective messages, are widely lacking. This disconnect, and the lack of local understanding and ownership of issues comprise the *communication gap*. The danger presented by this gap is that incoherent articulation of the most well-crafted public policies can lead to a situation where the policies benefit only the

most organized and opportunistic groups, while the costs are borne by the larger public, which is misinformed, confused, even resentful. Moreover, given the difference in resources and degree of organizing, this situation inevitably privileges the North. This can severely limit stakeholder ownership of policies, and consequently their implementation and efficacy.

Together, these gaps have combined to hobble the global policy-making process. Figure 1.2 illustrates the points of disruption in the traditional

policy formulation process. Taken together, these four gaps bring out the crisis of legitimacy of global governance. Legitimacy requires that the institutions be effective, normative, representative, responsive and transparent. The global system fulfills none of these criteria. It lacks the technical capacity, the ethical platform, the participatory mechanism, and the

Figure 1.2 Challenges to the traditional model



communication ability and disclosure that are prerequisites for legitimate decisions. In sum, the global community faces a crisis in its ability to address global issues. The failure of United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions to effectively address transboundary issues such as global climate change, world poverty, and peace and security is made increasingly clear. Yet it is also clear that progress has been made in some areas and that a variety of substitutes have emerged to compensate for the deficiencies of the traditional policy-making system.

1.1.4 Growth in Systems Consciousness

The unique challenge posed by globalization is how to develop policy and action in the absence of strong governmental organizations that can mediate, regulate and enforce decisions. More generally, globalization has brought pressure to develop new ways of addressing complex problems (Ackoff, 1974) in a situation where no party has clear responsibility and many parties are needed to fashion a solution.

Among these new ways of thinking, the most pronounced is the shift towards what is called systems thinking. Whereas traditional science builds knowledge mainly by breaking questions and things into ever-smaller parts, a systems perspective focuses upon how all the parts fit together. Both approaches are useful, but when undue attention is placed upon the parts, the aggregate impacts are often lost. This is particularly obvious with environmental issues, which provides incontrovertible evidence of the need for a more integrative approach.

Systems thinking is also changing the way we think of organizations and decision-making processes (Wheatley, 1992). Instead of an earlier partiality towards single-focus organizations, divided into self-contained divisions, there is much greater interest in flexible specialization, network development, and multi-purpose organizational forms. GPPNs can be said to reflect this shift of focus. Many of them strive to re-integrate diverse knowledge and perspectives by both creating a big tent for people and organizations with diverse ideas, and engaging with or building bridges to other networks and groups in order to create more integrated responses (Brown, 1993; Sharma et al., 1994).

Recent years have also witnessed a distinct change in the dominant metaphors employed by social analysts. Instead of thinking of the world in terms of mechanical models, there is a growing shift towards biological metaphors (Maturana and Varela, 1998). This shift is quite

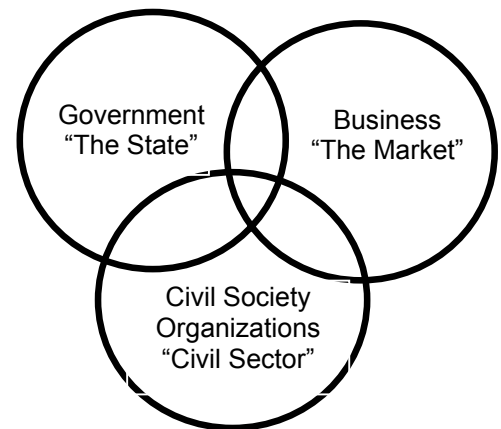
pervasive. For example, there is an increasing tendency to conceptualize even linear processes -- such as the assembly line--through biological metaphors, and thus view it as embedded in government, community, environmental and family systems that are necessary for it to function.

These changes are highly relevant to the emergence of GPPNs, since traditional decision making institutions have been slow to absorb the impact of innovative ways of thinking. As such, they have had to rely on external institutions and groups not only for access to new information but also for approaching the new problems in creative and potentially effective ways. GPPNs, in other words, have emerged in response to poorly organized - or under-organized systems. (Brown, 1980) Traditional organizations are structured to reflect mechanistic thinking; global policy issues, however, require structures such as GPPNs that can enable integrative work.

1.1.5 The Role of Change Agents

In other words, different institutions have different sources of legitimacy, different competencies and weaknesses, and different capacities for engaging in policy development. The simplest way to proceed is to start with the three sectors, which in the literature have an archetypal role: business, government, and civil society. These are not only viewed as concrete spheres for action, but are perceived as representing different organizational *forms* and organizational ethics. In fact, actual organizations can in principle be represented as one of these archetypes or as a hybrid of these three archetypes. In Figure 1.2, a common depiction of these sectors, the hybrids exist in the areas of overlap.

Figure 1.3 The three organizational sectors



These sectors are defined by attributes, some of which are presented in Table 1.1.² Instead of categorizing organizations based upon their legal status, this classification focuses on their inherent attributes--of which legal status is only one of the determining factors.

² This table draws from a tradition developed at least since the early 1960s with the publication of *A Comparative Analysis of Complex Organizations*. (Etzioni 1961) Other important works include (Williamson 1981; Powell 1990; Brown and Korten 1991) (Ouchi 1980; Najam 1996)

Table 1.1 Comparative Distinctive Attributes of the three Sectors (Waddell, 2000b)			
Sector	State Sector	Market Sector	Civil Sector
Primary interest	Political	Economic	Social
Primary constituents	Voters	Consumers	Communities
Control agents	Rulers	Owners/Merchants	Citizens
Goods produced	Public	Private	Public/Group
Core competencies include	Enforcement of state-wide standards	Production of goods and services	Mobilization of communities
Primary resources include	Law/police/taxation	Financial capital	Voluntary energy
Primary weaknesses include	Rigidity	Monopoly	Fragmentation
Primary objective	Stability	Profit	Social change
Dominant organizational form	Bureaucratic	Hierarchical	Flexible

Each sector has core competencies and weaknesses embedded in its very structure. The ability to deal with the complex issues and opportunities that accompany globalization often requires combining these competencies in ways that also help overcome weaknesses (Waddell, 2000a). More generally, change strategies that engage all three social sectors--business, government, and civil society organizations--are better placed to engender change in accordance with a broad range of social interests. However, this presentation also brings out the obstacles in this regard. Intra-sectoral communication is both more likely and more feasible than inter-sectoral communication, largely because of the fundamental differences in the basic logic of the sectors (as presented in Table 1.1). Thus, inter-sectoral collaboration presents both unique challenges *and* unique opportunities. Despite the obstacles, they provide an ideal vehicle for societal learning and change (Waddell, 1999).

1.2 Role and Function of GPPNs

To summarize the discussion thus far, the process of globalization has created both a demand for and a supply of innovative and hybrid organizational structures to engage in the formulation of public policies. The erosion of traditional governance institutions, the emergence of new problems requiring attention at the global level, and the need for innovative thinking about these problems has generated a demand for new institutional actors and new organizational types. At the same time, the resurgent role of civil society has enabled bridges to be built between groups that hitherto acted in opposition or isolation. These trends have coalesced in the formation multi-group networks and hybrid organizations. The most prominent of these are referred to as GPPNs.

1.2.1 Overview

GPPNs have emerged to fill the gaps created when the capacity of national governance is overwhelmed, and the legitimacy and efficacy of global governance institutions

inadequate. Key themes around which GPPNs have coalesced have been health, human rights, labor rights, trade, poverty and environment. While this is a recent phenomenon, some precursors of modern-day GPPNs predate the era of globalization. Perhaps the classic example of the latter is the World Conservation Union (see Box 1). Examples of GPPNs include the Pesticide Action Network, the Apparel Industry Partnership, the World Commission on Dams, the Campaign to Ban Landmines, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, The Ring, and the Third World Network.

Box 1.1 The IUCN: An early GPPN

Before the phrase had been coined, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) had begun to operate as a global public policy network, spearheading collaborative efforts to bring a civil society voice to the global decision-making process. One of the first organizations that included both governments and NGOs in its membership, it combined these in voluntary networks of experts (organized through its Commission system), and supported this interaction through a secretariat comprised mainly of experts from the various scientific disciplines.

In the 1970s and 80s, the Union brought the agenda of its stakeholders to bear in a number of global environmental policy decisions; evidence of this can be found in the growth of national park systems, the awareness of the threat of species extinction, and even the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme, in which IUCN was a key player. A culmination of this longstanding pattern is, ironically, the Biodiversity Convention, which closely reflects - and marks a turning point in - IUCN's proactive policy efforts. Today, however, IUCN shies away from its once powerful role as an organizing and mobilizing force for global policy and leans instead toward the more technical and technocratic aspects of conservation work. As a result, its influence in the South and with civil society groups operating outside this agenda is waning.

These groups are clearly a diverse bunch, yet commonalities exist which distinguish them under the GPPN moniker. At the most basic level, the vast range of networks from which they are drawn share a focus on transnational public policy issues which traditional forms of governance have failed to address. In other words, they are oriented towards filling the four major gaps - ethical, operational, participatory, and communicative - that have emerged in global public policy formulation. They do so by undertaking a number of similar activities.³ These include:

First, GPPNs *place new issues on the global agenda*, and in doing so, help to close the participatory and ethical gaps. Networks serving this function are often – though not strictly - advocacy-oriented, and tend to make use of information and communication technology, as well as the media, for coverage of the issue of interest as well as for building a global base of support. Take for example the Campaign to Ban Landmines. The problem in this case involves the heavy toll and continued threat of unspent landmines to primarily rural people in developing countries. These people tend to be poor and largely disarticulated from the global policy-making process. In addition, the dispersion of the problem among a handful of geographically disparate and often deeply poor countries has served to limit action on the issue at the national or regional level. Here, the participatory gap is evident, as is the ethical imperative. Around the issue, the Campaign to Ban Landmines took shape. Making extensive use of the media, as well as key public personalities, it succeeded in placing this issue on the global agenda and, effectively, in strengthening the participatory voice of the vulnerable groups and addressing an issue of global ethical import.

In this role, GPPNs have tended also to succeed by presenting clear and focused goals and by framing issues in ways that attract unconventional support. An example of this is Greenpeace's approach of the insurance industry - heavy hit by the costs of extreme weather events - to garner input from that sector to the Kyoto Protocol negotiations. The resulting partnership helped to elevate the issue as a global priority among the business community.

GPPNs can also *facilitate the negotiation and setting of standards*, thus contributing to the closing of the participatory and communicative gaps. This has been the objective of, for example, the World Commission on Dams, the Apparel Industry Partnership, the Global

³ These are a subset of functions distilled by Reinicke and Deng (2000) from a series of case studies.

Box 1.2 The Microcredit Summit: A Finance and Development GPPN

The Microcredit Summit is a global campaign to expand the use of microcredit as a tool to alleviate poverty. Launched in 1997, by 2005 the campaign aims to reach 100 million of the world's poorest families with microcredit. The campaign brings together microcredit practitioners, advocates, educational institutions, donor agencies, international financial institutions, NGOs and others to promote best practices in the field, and to learn from each other.

Run with a staff of about a dozen and a budget of \$1 million, it is structured as a program of the Washington, DC-based NGO called the Results Education Fund. It has "Councils" of different stakeholder groups, the most important three being a Council of Practitioners which had 2200 organization-members by 2001, and a Council of multi- and bi-lateral agencies and donors.

Reporting Initiative (GRI), Forest Stewardship Council, Marine Stewardship Council. While this is often an involved and laborious task, the use or creation of a GPPN for the purpose has helped to facilitate the process; through the process, a number of policy-making gaps can be addressed - in particular, ethical, participatory and operational.

Take GRI. Sustainable development, as a concept, has gained primacy in the global arena, yet clear methods for gauging it have remained elusive. GRI has helped advance this cause by engaging in what can be called a classic example of lateral thinking. Instead of harping on the standards themselves, GRI concentrated its energies on a related issue,

namely the need to disclose publicly relevant information. This has resulted in the forging of a coalition - businesses, governments, intergovernmental institutions, NGOs, and other civil society groups - that has succeeded in developing a set of sustainability indicators for voluntary application by businesses for the purposes of sustainability reporting. While its focus remains on disclosure, the GRI process has enabled diverse stakeholders to influence the definition of sustainability indicators, enhancing both public participation as well as the ethical underpinnings of the process. It provides a sound framework within which these stakeholders can grapple the many operational questions of sustainable development in concrete and universal terms.

Another central function of GPPNs is *knowledge gathering and dissemination*. By engaging diverse government, business and civil society networks, GPPNs provide vehicles for broad knowledge dissemination and social change (Waddell, 1999). The Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research, for instance, encourages, generates and shares current knowledge on agricultural practices. Over its existence, CGIAR has dramatically diminished

both the operational gap that circumscribed developing country responses to food security challenges, as well as the communication gap, which limited the extent to which information on agricultural policy and innovation was made available and meaningful by national and intergovernmental agencies to the public.

GPPNs can help with *implementation of ideas and decisions*. They have been found, most notably, to be effective in helping to implement global Conventions. The World Resources Institute, for example, is organizing governments and NGOs in a project designed specifically to close the gap between environmental accords and government action. As another example, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) have played a central role in the implementation of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) through their collaborative international network, TRAFFIC. In essence, the oversight necessary to implement this treaty in a meaningful way has required an international network far larger and more active than the terms of the Convention could support. TRAFFIC has provided a ground-level presence that serves two purposes: first, to buttress and strengthen the CITES monitoring and verification capacity and, in doing so, diminish the operational challenge posed by international trade in endangered species; and second, to assist in the *communication* of CITES, making the language and mandate of the treaty meaningful at the local level.

Finally, GPPNs can *enhance public participation*. These networks are designed to enable broad engagement through business, civil society and government networks, which in turn can enhance trust and global social capital. The participatory process created by the World Commission on Dams serves as an example of this process. The WCD held as a central goal, the articulation of many interested voices, and to do so brought a diversity of stakeholders to the decision-making process. The resulting ‘Dams And Development: A New Framework for Decision-Making’ represents a tri-sectoral collaboration. Here, not only were the gap in public participation greatly diminished, but the ethical concerns of stakeholders were placed on the agenda along with the more instrumental, private considerations related to dams.

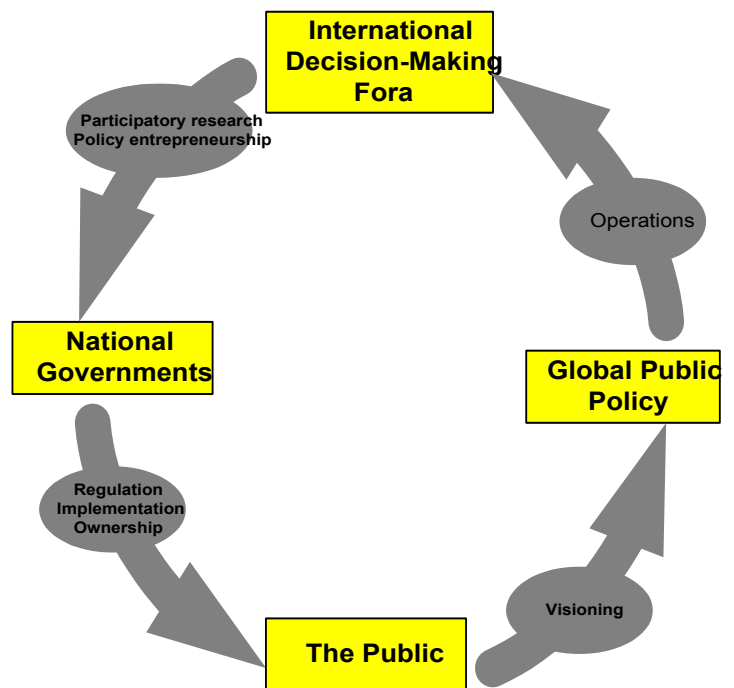
More generally, it could be argued that while globalization has led to greater interaction and interconnectedness between people in different countries and different situations, it has not resulted in the creation of democratic institutions that can mediate conflicts, synthesize perspectives, and monitor actions by governments and quasi-governmental institutions. At this

moment, the responsibility for introducing democratic concerns into the global arena is being done in a haphazard and ad hoc manner, through a variety of structures and forms. Many of these are led by NGOs, but often entail partnership with other civil society organizations - trade unions, businesses, the mass media, religious groups, political parties, and others. While the situation may change over time, and democracy may find a foothold in the formal organizational structures of global governance, today the participatory (or equivalently, democratic) gap should not remain unattended. Among their other functions, GPPNs contribute to the overcoming of this gap today.

1.2.2 Closing Governance Gaps

Through these functions, global public policy networks assist in closing the governance gaps. Indeed, they may be the most effective mechanism for doing so. Many analysts argue that we are witnessing - by necessity - a paradigm shift toward this sort of public policy-making, in large part, as a response to the obstacles in policy-making. By creating a strong participatory process, for example, GPPNs clearly diminish the participatory gap. Through implementation of ideas and decisions, they can help to close the communication gap. By engaging in discussion and criticism of global public policies, civil society groups have helped re-introduce ethical concerns into the analysis and discussions.

Figure 1.4 Global public policy-making in a changing world



In contrast to Figure 1, the illustration below aims to show that an alternative process has been grafted on to global public policy-making. The immediate distinction one notes is that, in the face of unresponsive local and national political processes, public participation is turning increasingly toward the global arena where active stakeholders groups are developing frameworks to interact. In essence, the direction of the process under the GPPN model is

reversed. It follows a traditional action learning process of on-going cycles of reflecting/visioning-analyzing/planning-acting/experimenting.

Figure 3 illustrates the impact of the efforts of GPPNs in the context of the global policy-making process. To illustrate, take the example of the Climate Action Network (CAN), a global public policy network of over 287 NGOs, organized into seven regional networks and coordinated by regional focal points.

CAN's work is guided by its ultimate objective, to "protect the atmosphere while allowing for sustainable and equitable development worldwide." It approaches this goal by coordinating information exchange and NGO strategy, and by fostering and promoting policy options. This enables civil society and business groups to collaborate in a visioning process, and thus articulate shared ethical ground and generate tenable global public policies in the fractious arena of climate change. By drawing in the views of others, and continually refining and advancing the founding vision of an ethical solution to the climate problem, CAN helps to diminish the *ethical gap*.

CAN consists of analysts as well as advocates, and its ethical voice creates a space for other analyses and technical research. In other words, the existence of the network encourages public policy research on issues that may have remained excluded from intergovernmental discussions. It also fosters and publicizes analysis that is meaningful and valuable to international decision-making forums - e.g., on equity implications of the Clean Development Mechanism - and in doing so, helps to bring the process closer to workable agreements. In this way, CAN is able to access the global decision-making process and, incidentally, to help to close the *operational gap*.

In turn, the legitimacy created by CAN's contribution to the ethical and operational domains creates a role for CAN members in their respective domestic policy arenas. The experience at the global level also equips these groups with participatory tools and strategies with which to engage governments and other stakeholders. Essentially, through policy entrepreneurship, they build a basis on which to engage with and advise key participants - i.e., national government representatives - and in doing so engage the very actors that CAN constituents have had difficulty accessing through traditional systems of public participation.⁴ In this way, the system

⁴ While the term 'policy entrepreneurship' is used above with regard to global public policy, GPPNs can also exercise policy entrepreneurship within the civil society and business sectors. An example of this is the Global

helps create alternative channels of public participation and thus contributes to closing the *participatory gap*, particularly for the concerned citizenry that they and their member organizations represent.

National governments that are influenced through this alternative process are, in turn, better equipped to engage with the public in broader and more meaningful terms. The deployment of participatory research and analysis methods, as well as strategies for participatory decision-making create a broader base of ownership and support for new policies and thus enhance the chances for their effective implementation. It also creates a more sophisticated mechanism for social learning through which stakeholders are exposed to the substance and import of the climate negotiations with fuller recognition of previously marginalized concerns. In this way, the *communication gap* is filled.

The CAN experience serves as an example of many parallel processes which, in aggregate, have set in motion an alternative process for global public policy-making. It is important to note, however, that these alternative processes complement, rather than replace the traditional model of policy-making. Take for example, the process of public participation in government - primarily through political parties. The overlaid process of mobilizing new stakeholder groups enhances not only the capacity of national governments, but also those of political parties, the mass media, and other protagonists of the political process.

1.2.3 Structure of GPPNs

A detailed elaboration of the innovative structures and organizational types of various GPPNs is in Section 1.3. Here, it may be useful to highlight a few key attributes. GPPNs are dynamic in both process and structure. They tend to be loose transnational alliances, relying upon structured informality and information technology, often in innovative ways, for building the “consensual knowledge” of the issues that defines them (Reinicke and Deng, 2000). They often combine functions that were traditionally performed by distinct organizations, e.g. policy development, research, advice, advocacy, and in some cases, even service delivery. These networks span across and thus help bridge various traditional gaps - e.g. between the north and the south;

Reporting Initiative, which serves as a surrogate for global sustainability reporting standards by introducing a new policy within the business sector which is both easily adoptable and reputationally advantageous.

between large organizations and small, informal groups; between expertise and experience; between various academic disciplines, especially between the natural and social sciences, between various scales of activity (global, national, regional, and local), and between goals and agendas that were often viewed as incompatible (e.g. between trade and sustainable development, or environment and development).

While they most often involve civil society and government sectors, GPPNs can also be tripartite in nature, involving for-profit business. In instances where all three sectors are involved, GPPNs can serve as a corrective force, balancing the influence of business with the expressed interests of civil society.

Finally, GPPNs have made the most progress in developing and popularizing participatory methodologies. These include investment in non-hierarchical facilitation of meetings, support for stakeholder attendance, development of communication skills, linking process to outcomes and vice versa, and acknowledgment of alternative formulations or conceptualizations of the same issues. These have been adapted, in some cases in an over-simplified form, by governmental and inter-governmental organizations, e.g. in the World Bank's *Voices of the Poor* project.

1.2.4 Function of GPPNs

The rise of GPPNs provides a potent mode of engagement for players within each the three sectors - namely a direct relationship with issue-based networks rather than individual institutions. In the context of globalization, large-scale change and systems consciousness, discussed above, actors wishing to impact global public policy are realizing that it is no longer efficient or effective to approach partners on the basis of individual organizations. Networks, on the other hand, and GPPNs in particular, organize actors around issues for the pursuit of shared goals and visions. In the future, it can be argued that even UN agencies will increasingly come to see themselves as networks of networks - involving, not only member governments and other UN agencies, but also non-governmental organizations, businesses, and other major groups.

This functional organization provided by the GPPN model - linking actors across sectors, around issues, for action on shared policy goals - is the model's key role and the reason for the recent GPPN rise. GPPNs are a natural extension of the historic evolution of organizational types.

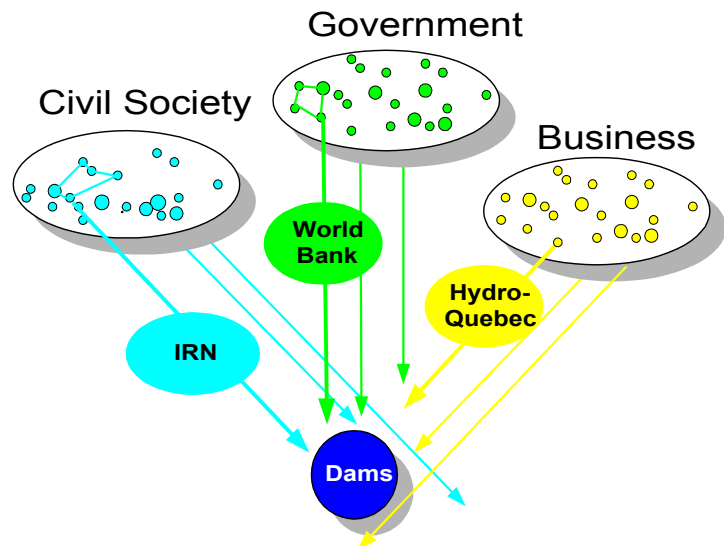
This point can be seen most clearly in the history of both inter- and intra-sectoral engagement. Groups in each of the three sectors have long had productive relationships with key individuals - academic scholars, business leaders, consultants, activists, policy makers - who have helped to sharpen and advance their various missions and objectives. However, across sectors, organizations began to recognize that these individuals were themselves generally part of institutions - universities, research institutes, business associations, think tanks, advocacy groups, community support groups, grassroots organizations, corporations, and others - and therefore that it made sense to establish working relationships with the organizations as well as with individuals. Many intergovernmental agencies found, in fact, that it was far more defensible and practical to establish relationships with organizations than with individuals (a development which brought a broader array of voices into the global arena); those in the civil society sector had for some time recognized the co-benefits and simple efficiency of group-to-group partnering.

Still, the relationship with organizations is but one phase in an evolving process of inter- and intra-sectoral engagement; with time it has proven not to meet all of the needs of today's global issues. In response, a third level of organizational development has taken place, whereby many organizations across sectors - wishing to share information and coordinate activities - have become members of networks.

Today, large numbers of networks of individuals and institutions have taken shape in an attempt to organize information and coordinate activity. The Sierra Club serves as an example of an advocacy-oriented network; over time it has expanded into an international member-based network, which advocates global and U.S.

environmental protection and provides dues-paying members with information and action that can be taken on campaigns. The result of this trend has been an increase in the potency of sectoral input to public policy.

Figure 1.5 Traditional and network approaches to global public policy issues

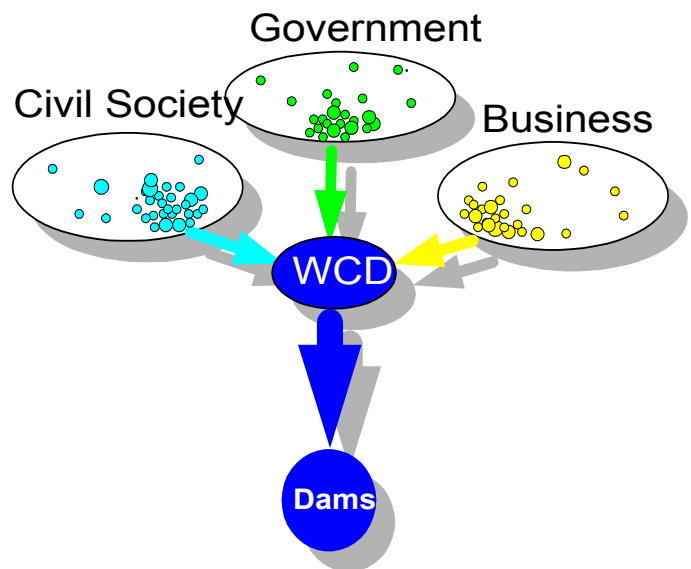


Nevertheless, a lack of cohesion persists. Let us take the example of dams. Figure 1.6 illustrates the policy-making environment surrounding this issue. From the civil society sector, the International Rivers Network (IRN) has taken shape to advocate globally for sustainable river and watershed policies. At the same time, the World Bank has been advancing and refining its historically controversial policies on dams, and private sector utilities such as Hydro-Quebec have been attempting to resolve public policy problems surrounding large and equally controversial dam projects.

Within each sector, groups and networks of groups continue to target the same issue on an individual basis, as figure 1.6 aims to capture. While some level of input from each sector has been coordinated by sectoral networks, such as the IRN, and intergovernmental groups like the World Bank and UNDP, efforts to target key issues have by in large been of an uncoordinated nature. Thus, while each effort by each institution or network may in its own right be useful and praiseworthy, the lack of organization into a broader and more cohesive framework will generally mean that their potential reach and impact on the target issue is not fully realized.

Today, we are in the midst of a fourth level of organizational development, whereby many organizations across sectors - wishing to impact global public policy around a specific issue - have become members of global public policy networks. Recognizing and wishing to leverage each other's strengths, organizations and networks of organizations are coalescing around specific global public policy issues. GPPNs are springing up on the issues of trade, development finance, gender, freshwater, forests, youth employment, and others. (The distinctions between traditional networks and global public policy networks are outlined in section 1.3.1)

Figure 1.6 GPPN approach to global public policy issues



The majority of GPPNs are led by and comprised mainly of NGOs, however, a number of prominent networks are tripartite or multi-partite in nature; many of the latter two have been organized at the behest of intergovernmental organizations. Extending the example of dams, figure 1.6 illustrates the organization provided by the World Commission on Dams, a tripartite GPPN.

There would seem to be significant utility to the three sectors, and to their stakeholders, of engaging in a GPPN - and in particular, a tri-sectoral GPPN. Essentially, the input of organizations is harmonized by the GPPN into a core set of objectives. The reach and impact of individual groups and networks are magnified by the input of other GPPN members, expanding and enhancing the overall impact on the issue in question.

1.2.5 Implications for the Three Organizational Sectors

Intergovernmental Organizations: In addition to the contributions of GPPNs to policy-making, they can have significant implications for individual participants, not least of which are the intergovernmental institutions. The term ‘intergovernmental’ is used here to refer to organizations that operate on a supra-national level, with representation from a number of nations. Such groups include of course the UN and Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank, IMF), the International Labour Organization and the more recent World Trade Organization, among others.

Though the long-run impacts of GPPNs may be impossible to define at this point, we would suggest that their emergence has significant implications for both the *processes* that intergovernmental institutions host, as well as the institutions that participate in them. In the global arena, the intergovernmental organizations provide a platform for negotiations and policy-making. In the face of globalization and mounting complexity of the issues they face, certain intergovernmental organizations are rendered increasingly ineffective and - to the extent that they fail to enable broader participation - increasingly illegitimate in the eyes of various stakeholders. Indeed, many of these groups - and the very decision-making processes - face a crisis of legitimacy today. This was brought out most forcefully at Seattle with anti-WTO demonstrations in 1999, but there are many other examples. Much of the criticism pertains to the failure to provide access for critical voices, exclusion of the underrepresented, and absence of

stakeholder ownership. Undeniably, the effectiveness and sustainability of policy decisions - such as those that would have emerged from Seattle - would be greatly increased by the involvement of a broader cross-section of global society.

The absence of formal democratic institutions at the global level is at the heart of the legitimacy crisis. While it is not clear what forms global governance will take ultimately, it is clear that basic elements of democratic functioning and transparency will be essential. At this time, the GPPN framework may be best equipped to link with intergovernmental groups in the advancement of mutual policy goals, and in doing so, provide a surrogate for purely democratic forums. The access to global forums created in this way will go far toward repairing damaged legitimacy of these groups.

Engaging in global public policy networks can also provide intergovernmental organizations with an efficient mode of advancing its agenda, by leveraging the capabilities of groups far greater, in aggregate, than any agency can hope to command. Today's global problems require an inter-disciplinary approach. In addressing such problems, there must be access to knowledge that is current, technologically accurate, and contextually appropriate and, for effective implementation, knowledge that is *consensual* across sectors. This is a daunting undertaking and one, which no single agency, regardless of budgetary constraints, is equipped for; nor can most organizations afford the luxury of learning these things on their own. Instead, they need to leverage the activities of other sectors - in particular, civil society, which gathers, manages and cultivates this very knowledge. The most effective and efficient way of accessing this knowledge is through global public policy networks, which include such expertise, and are often organized precisely around these concerns.

An added incentive is that an engagement of this nature would provide a structured and transparent way of enabling tri-sectoral collaboration – a key concern for intergovernmental groups. The inherent involvement of civil society would enable an agency to partner with business in a manner that does not undermine its autonomy, nor its credibility. Further, it would provide a transparent and reliable mechanism to identify civil society organizations for accreditation and businesses for affiliation, as well as advice-giving roles.

A critical point in all of this, of course, is that GPPNs require intergovernmental organizations to see themselves as one of a number of actors, rather than *the* actor or even the most important

actor. The premise behind GPPNs is that stakeholders participating in the network - not the network managers - will generate solutions to the problem in question. Because of the relative novelty of this form of public policy instrument, GPPNs can be perceived as a challenge to mature bureaucracies. In pursuit of its mission, embracing the concept of “leading from behind” may involve adjustments in the organizational thinking of intergovernmental agencies. The trade-off provided by enhanced legitimacy, effectiveness and capacity to pursue their agendas would suggest that this institutional learning would be well worth the investment. Indeed, from the intergovernmental perspective, it makes a great deal of sense for agencies to view begin themselves as a network of networks.

Perhaps in recognition of this, some intergovernmental organizations are already engaged actively in building and participating in such networks. The World Bank has tried to create several networks - around dams, poverty, capacity building, and others. UNEP has supported the development of the business- and civil society-led Global Reporting Initiative, which aims to create global economic, social and environmental reporting frameworks for business. The World Health Organization has fostered the tri-sectoral Roll Back Malaria Initiative.

A final point to be made here is that, at an earlier stage, the shift seen in intergovernmental bodies from engagement with individuals to engagement with organizations (described above) has helped, at least in part, to build the capacity of organizations engaged in public interest work around the world; this shift has thus created a self-sustaining momentum for the policy work in which such groups are engaged. Similarly, today, intergovernmental bodies need to shift from engagement with organizations to engagement with networks of organizations (and individuals) in order to pursue effective global public policy. Such a shift will similarly strengthen existing networks, encourage the creation of new networks in necessary areas, and thus infuse an additional source of energy into the process. These are implicit outcomes of the process but ones that may turn out to be far more important in the long-run fulfillment of the missions of intergovernmental agencies.

The UN has increasingly acknowledged this development by emphasizing the importance of a tri-sectoral approach to complement or replace the current structure whereby UN bodies and agencies are answerable only to member governments. As UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, observed in his 1999 address to the World Economic Forum:

The United Nations once dealt only with governments. By now we know that peace and prosperity cannot be achieved without partnerships involving governments, international organizations, the business community and civil society.

To survive the credibility and efficacy crises which UN and other intergovernmental groups face, they require a mechanism for enabling participation, a mechanism for more effectively pursuing their missions, and efficiency of effort in both of these. Global public policy networks may provide a uniform response to these needs.

Civil Society Organizations: Civil society has been central to the evolution of the global public policy network. In essence, this sector has pushed the development of the GPPN innovation as a mechanism to enable greater inclusion in public policy making. Today, as the GPPN model is being replicated as bi- and tripartite networks, civil society is continuing to play a central role in supporting and advancing the model. At the same time, civil society organizations (CSOs) appear to be benefiting from the support that the model can in turn offer. The issues outlined below are a sample of those that the GPPN model can approach on behalf of CSOs.

- *Global versus local:* GPPNs can bring together international, national and local CSOs within a single network. Such groups clearly vary in size, scope, capacity, approach, focus and funding. As a general rule, Northern CSOs tend to be larger, global in focus, and often more research-oriented, whereas Southern CSOs tend to be smaller, locally focused and advocacy-oriented. Intergovernmental and national agencies, as well as business, have historically shied away from close engagement with this latter type of small-scale groups. However, the involvement of such actors in GPPNs (and the management of their participation by the network) could make such relationships easier for governmental agencies. From the perspective of these groups, it can provide them with access to the global public policy-making system, bringing a more equitable and representative array of stakeholder voices to the floor.
- *Individuals versus institutions:* Both individuals and organizations can serve as members of public policy networks. But while their respective roles may both enhance network functions, individuals are typically not able to access the global policy-making arena. This raises an important distinction between Northern and Southern approaches to partnering. Whereas in the North, the organization is valued and trusted to a greater degree than the individual, in the

South, the reverse is true. For adequate inclusion of Southern interests and voices, the possible role of individuals should be weighed carefully. Networks, by their nature, can serve the function of managing such diverse partner relationships on behalf of intersectoral initiatives.

- *Institutional Capacity:* NGOs vary significantly in their access to funds, training, hardware, human resources, and thus a variety of capacities. Perceived deficits in capacity can limit the ability of NGOs to participate in decision-making. However, it is often erroneous to gauge the potential of a CSO to contribute to the policy-making process on its access to these resources. One of the benefits to CSOs of participating in a network is that all participants can avail themselves of both the product (e.g., the evolving consensual knowledge) and the process (e.g. the act of developing consensual knowledge), and through this participation can enhance their own capacity.
- *Credibility:* The considerations above pose both challenge and opportunity to the traditional mode of policy-making. Challenges lie in the diversity of CSOs and in the fact that these groups are not endowed with equivalent legitimacy. The GPPN model minimizes this challenge by providing a built-in screening mechanism. The key point is that these networks are essentially communities, and as such they apply their own standards and sets of criteria to members. An important benefit of this process is that these standards, in turn, raise the bar not only for GPPN members, but also for their associates, helping to engender broad-based normative standards. This factor can make cross-sectoral engagement less problematic from the perspective of the more formal and uniform business and government sectors.

Business: While civil society is credited as the inspiration for many networks, others have been convened exclusively by business organizations (e.g. the WBCSD; the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum, European Business Council for a Sustainable Energy Future). With the recognition, on the part of the business sector, that solutions to transnational and global issues require a systemic approach, and that business is only one part of the system, the sector has become increasingly active in GPPNs. There are a number of other reasons that business should wish to pursue this sort of activity, including public image concerns. But the choice of the GPPN framework suggests that it offers specific added benefits. A key aspect of the GPPN model is that it enables the collaboration of civil society, business and government groups on relatively

equal footing. It can provide the business sector with a mechanism for accessing and interacting with the policy-making process. From the perspective of business - which is, like civil society, keen to have a larger voice in global public policy-making - this is an important development. Second, it can achieve this access through a framework, which is girded with the broader credibility of both intergovernmental organizations and civil society. Business can, for example, establish its own environmental and human rights standards, but without the participation of civil society organizations these receive little credibility. Moreover, with intersectoral collaborations where CSO and government challenge business and one another to improve themselves, often creative new solutions are discovered that can develop into new business opportunities. (Waddell, 2000b)

Unlike the civil society and government sectors, business faces unique credibility challenges in the public eye. This fact is in large part the result of civil society campaigns to expose social and environmental transgressions. Today, the corporate sector may be simultaneously more powerful and more exposed to public scrutiny than at any other time. Consultants advise companies to take care. The London-based Control Risks Group – a business risk consultancy - in its 1997 report warned of the need to obtain a social “license to operate” and that “heightened international scrutiny means that perceived transgressors have ‘no hiding place’ (French, 2000).

Different actors of course perceive this point –that business is in need of increasing its legitimacy in the policy-making arena – differently. From the intergovernmental perspective, while there is an overall trend toward greater engagement with the business sector, a number of observers have expressed serious reservations about the implications of this trend for the autonomy and reputation of the processes concerned. Chief among these are that the agency overseeing the process could relinquish autonomy by accepting corporate support and shifting toward alignment with corporate interests, and that by aligning with these interests, both the agency and the process could experience a reduction in credibility among civil society organizations. From the civil society perspective, many independent thinkers from both North and South have cautioned specifically against close partnering between UN agencies and the business community, warning that such initiatives risk becoming exclusive partnerships between global elites. By blurring the roles and responsibilities of different partners, such an alignment could undermine already

weakened systems of social responsibility while marginalizing sustainable economic systems, such as livelihood economies.

On the other hand, partnership with business can advance both the UN and NGO missions in a number of ways, from provision of resources for critical environmental work to an increase in social and environmental corporate accountability. Rather than avoid such engagement, processes for partnering with business must be made inclusive, participatory, and transparent, open to a broader set of stakeholder communities and embracing a larger set of core values.

Within the GPPN framework, NGOs, which tend to take a critical approach to the private sector, can provide the ‘watchdog’ function that lends credibility to the policy endeavor, potentially guiding initiatives away from socially detrimental activities and toward broadly sustainable work. The GPPN structure can thus allow business an entry into the process, with the access and public relations benefits it seeks; at the same time, it can enable organizations to increase their engagement with the private sector without risking autonomy or integrity.

1.2.6 GPPN Challenges

The loose dynamism that in many ways defines GPPNs, the diversity of their composition, the entrenched policy-making processes that they aim to influence, all suggest that in practice the GPPN as an organizational form is likely to face significant challenges. Network managers and participants alike must address such challenges. Below, four key challenges are outlined:

Engaging organizational partners: GPPNs must embrace sufficient systems’ stakeholders that they can take some meaningful action together; for GPPN network participants, there is a similar challenge to reach critical mass within their sectoral constituencies. This requires understanding potential organization-participants and being able to frame issues in ways that will engage them. (Waddell, 2000a) Given the diversity of organizations that an effective GPPN must embrace, this is no minor challenge.

But when numerous organizations are engaged to work together, it is easy to lose track of individual organizations’ commitment. GPPN and network initiatives are usually a minor part of the overall activity of organizational and network partners, and therefore other activities can easily distract partners’ attention from their role in the initiative. Moreover, the key individuals connecting with a network project are often simply organizational representatives who act like

“bridges” or “doors” to the organization. Although they usually can “deliver” an organization in terms of its name and official commitment, they often need help to deliver the necessary input to the initiative.

Partners usually need outside support to help think through their role in network and GPPN strategies and to ensure that they are being developed. It may be useful to distinguish between organizations by the centrality (primary, secondary, tertiary) of the initiative to them. This helps to apply resources more effectively and manage problems. Engaging organizations must start with understanding the organizations’ own goals, and clarifying how the initiative will help them achieve their goals. Therefore, GPPN strategies must be able to define and manage activity in terms of partner goals as well as the goals of the initiative itself.

Being “glocal”: Geographically broad initiatives have to manage activities over large distances, making the initiative relevant to local communities as well as regional or global organizations. Managing this challenge means distinguishing between global concerns and local ones, and making sure that both are being achieved. This can be particularly problematic when application of international conventions, “standards” and “criteria” are among desired outputs. Regional and global organizations define their goals in terms of inter-regional comparisons and common sets of indicators, whereas these are often seen as irrelevant by local institutions that are looking for ways to drive their local activity rather than a global agenda.

Developing with simplicity: Large networks need to evolve and learn, and as they learn they often find it necessary to add new processes, committees, and structural features to their design. In doing so, it is easy to develop an overly complex structure through incremental changes that inevitably accompany these types of project.

In order to maintain coherence, weed out redundancies and structures that fall into disuse, and maintain enough simplicity that the network can be easily understood and do its work effectively, regular self-review of an organization's form and functionality is necessary.

This challenge also demands new ways of structuring organizations, drawing from biological metaphors such as with dispersed leadership-, chaotic-, learning-, and systems-based traditions. It requires thinking of development stages of initiatives with these non-mechanistic models that

are still in development infancy. (Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 1992; Maturana and Varela, 1998; Holman and Devane, 1999).

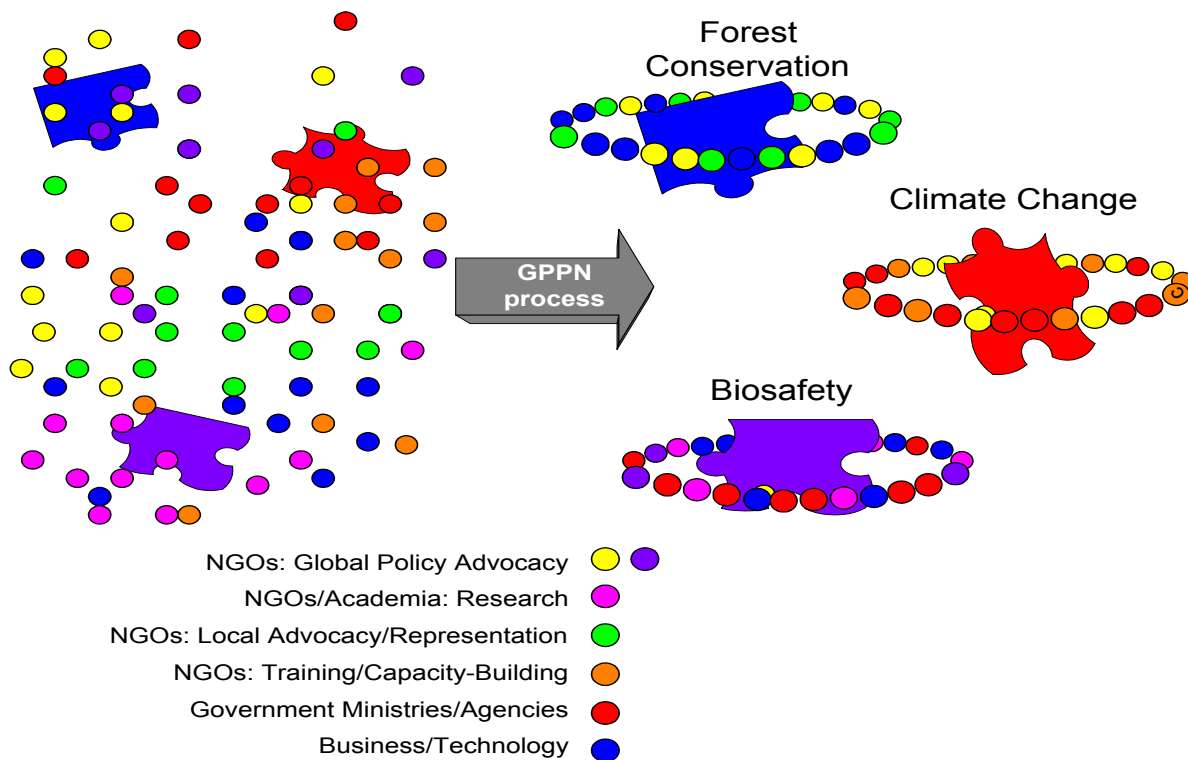
Building focus: In large, network and multi-stakeholder initiatives defining the “problem/opportunity” is a critical and on-going process. The focus can be easily lost when a network initiative strives to maintain the commitment of organizational partners. The partners have their own goals, which can easily pull an initiative in a number of directions as it strives to maintain partner commitment. A key task of GPPNs is to manage the evolution of the initiative so that it remains dynamic, while keeping collective activity focused.

Maintaining pace and flexibility: Engaging large numbers of organizations and building their understanding about and commitment to collective directions takes significant periods of times. Although GPPNs and their networks focus upon chronic issues and solutions that will endure, the ability to respond rapidly to changing contexts, opportunities, and knowledge is a substantial challenge. It suggests the increased importance of on-going actions such as experiments and their expansion, in comparison to rules, declarations, and statements.

1.2.7 Summary of GPPN Role and Function

The role of the GPPN model is to provide a dynamic but coherent, issue-based framework within which interested parties, across sectors, can combine strengths in order to address a global policy issue of mutual concern. The illustration below is intended to frame, beyond the advantages to individual participants, the role and potential impact of GPPNs on real global issues, using examples of key global environmental problems. On the one hand, we have an array of actors from the three sectors circling complex and intricate issues. By unifying like agendas of complementary organizations (examples of types of organizations from each of the three sectors are provided in the figure below), the GPPN model may be able to provide a highly effective approach to addressing these global public policy challenges.

Figure 7: Organizing through the GPPN framework for environmental solutions



1.3 GPPN Profile

Global public policy networks are indeed networks, but they are, as has been outlined above, something more. This section aims to clarify the distinctions that exist along the path of organizational evolution: between organizations and networks and between networks and GPPNs. Below we outline a typology of networks, emphasizing the distinctions of GPPNs. Next, we sketch a set of indicators, suggested by the literature to provide an indication of a network's effectiveness. This latter set of a priori assumptions is used to inform the project's analysis; they are considered preliminary, and are to be built upon through the process of the analysis.

1.3.1 Defining Network Types

Although networks have always existed, those associated with GPPNs represent a new and evolving organizational form. Of course, all organizations are themselves networks of relationships. Organizations are, however, networks with highly formalized hierarchies of power and command, where the individual-to-organization relationship is critical. In contrast, GPPN

networks are predominantly organization-to-organization with little assigned, formal power; participating organizations have a more peer-like status, comparable with nation-state members of the United Nations. Naturally, different organizational members possess different amounts of influence, varying with factors such as size, expert-knowledge, resources, and leadership; nevertheless the basic formal interactions are dominated by independence and by the ability to leave.

Key features of inter-organizational networks may be summarized by four points (Chisholm, 1998):

- 1) From a structural and analytical perspective, they operate at a level between organizations and society in general. Tri-sectoral networks include the three types of organizations, from the perspective of distinctive attributes. Activities revolve around a relatively broad vision and general goals that reflect the interests of multiple organizations.
- 2) They provide a forum where organizations can develop a broader understanding of problems and opportunities (the "consensual knowledge" described above), and can take collective action based upon that understanding.
- 3) Participating organizations are loosely tied and are usually considered "members". They join a network based upon their interest in, and ability to contribute to, a network's action, as well as some criteria established by the network. As members they participate within the network on a collectively defined basis that usually allows for a great variation in intensity of participation based upon a member organization's desires. If a member wishes to leave, they usually can do so relatively easily.
- 4) Networks are self-regulating . Although networks usually have some legal corporate form that obliges them to meet some basic government-defined responsibilities, through member decisions they establish their own agenda and range of action, conditions for membership, obligations of members, and penalties for non-complying members.

Networks are particularly intriguing vehicles to address global public policy issues for a variety of reasons. They can mobilize and combine diverse resources; the diverse perspectives that they embody can produce innovative solutions and action; they enable broad dissemination of ideas

and activities; they are usually much less expensive to run than a traditional bureaucracy created for the same purpose.

Network organizations can be classified in a number of ways, but the most useful system is based upon the work they do. One particularly relevant classification system was developed by Young to describe international “regimes” - governance activities without a government where diverse parties identify “...sets of rules, decision-making procedures, and/or programs that give rise to social practices, assign roles to the participants in these practices, and govern their interactions.” (Young, 1999) The four types of regimes Young identifies are:

- 1) Regulatory Regimes: This includes groups such as the World Trade Organization, which replaced the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, both of which have mechanisms to back them up. While these are government networks (with significant business influence), there is increasing pressure to broaden these and create more open processes engaging other sectors, or even allocate a more minor role to government. The Global Reporting Initiative, for example, is stimulating the creation of reporting standards that will largely be the product of business-CSO interaction, with only modest governmental input.
- 2) Procedural Regimes: These networks provide processes through which participants can develop choices with respect to an issue of interest. The World Commission on Dams is a key example of this type of network, where an extensive process of collaborative research took place over several years in an attempt to reach consensus on issues involving dams. These also include activities where a pre-determined set of actions occurs in response to some event or research, such as setting of annual limits on fisheries.
- 3) Programmatic Regimes: Often networks are formed to pool resources and undertake collaborative action in response to an issue or opportunity. The pooling is usually necessary not just because of the scale of an issue, but because resources that are distinct to specific organizational sectors - such as legal authority of governments, managerial skill of business, and trust relationships of civil society - are needed to undertake effective activity. This is true with new network collaborations in fields as diverse as water and sanitation, youth, resource extraction, and road safety. In these cases

organizations from the three sectors combine resources to produce cost-effective and financially and environmentally sustainable outcomes.

- 4) **Generative Regimes:** These are networks that aim to develop new social practices. They have an important role in shaping discourse with regard to a specific issue, and in enabling collective learning, visioning, and dissemination. Generative regimes have been particularly important with regard to development and application of the concept of “sustainable development”.

The four categories of networks based upon their work do, of course, interact significantly. Generative networks can turn into regulatory ones, for example. Or, one network may have a generative and procedural role at the same time.

Young has a more formal and often government-led sense of “regime” in comparison to “network”, as used in GPPNs. These classic regimes have often been criticized for their lack of effectiveness and for their exclusion of greater voice; in practice, these regimes are being modified and new networks are being established to enable greater inclusiveness and effectiveness.

Regardless of their classification, all networks go through some common stages of development. These can be broken into five stages, each with their own challenges. Waddell and Brown (1997) identify these stages for formation of trisectoral GPPNs:

- (1) **Identifying preconditions for Inter-sectoral partnerships:** The potential for forming a GPPN is investigated, sometimes through formal investigatory processes but often through encounters and discussions through established social networks of an individual or small group of individuals.
- (2) **Convening actors and defining problems/opportunities:** One or more organizations that have status and legitimacy among the key potential network stakeholders, convenes stakeholders to collectively determine whether there are sufficiently strong shared interests to work together.
- (3) **Setting shared directions:** With shared interests, a series of other meetings or exchanges occur to jointly define activities that can be taken collaboratively.

- (4) Implementing joint action strategies: The plans are implemented - often at a pilot scale - and the collaborators learn more about one another and how to work together.
- (5) Expanding and institutionalizing success: Very often initial success starts a generative feedback process that identifies subsequent actions to undertake together. Often this involves expansion of the initial success (“scaling up”) or expansion into a new series of activities. If appropriate, a longer-term strategy for supporting the joint activity is developed.

In global network formation, Cooperrider (1990) emphasizes the importance of developing an “appreciative” approach. That is, to build relationships based upon shared stories about successes; this leads to energetic visions that in turn lead to collective actions. This contrasts with a challenge or problem focused process that is more difficult to turn into generative action on a sustained basis (Cooperrider, 1990).

Box 1.2 Traditional Networks and GPPNs

While quite similar to more traditional networks, some of the key distinctions between these and global public policy networks are the following:

- GPPNs activities have a **global orientation** and tend to be directly linked to the global policy-making arena.
- GPPNs take shape around a **specific issue** (e.g., dams as opposed to energy or development), and thus tend to quickly generate specific, finite goals. Indeed, the lifetime and utility of a GPPN may be delineated by its success in attaining these goals
- The **issue** around which a GPPN takes shape **drives its agenda and thus its membership**. This is a slightly more complex distinction. In traditional member organizations (such as the American Medical Association), the membership often defines the group at a given point in time and thus drives the agenda. Many advocacy-oriented networks share with GPPNs this issue-driven membership, but they may not share the orientation toward global policy (take, for example, AIDS Action, an issue-driven network, with a national agenda).

In this development process, we see more clearly the evolution of the GPPN form. Clearly, global public policy networks are a young and evolving phenomenon, but common characteristics exist. To reiterate our earlier definition, GPPNs are: *formal or informal coalitions of organizations and individuals that hold as a central goal the development of new norms, visions, analyses, methods of collecting and disseminating knowledge, and ways of operating that can directly impact global public policy. GPPNs engage directly in global policy-making arenas and/or actively fill the void in global policy left by traditional mechanisms. To achieve their objectives, GPPNs serve a number of innovative bridging functions, spanning the following divides: sectoral,*

geopolitical, experiential, professional or disciplinary, ideological, scale, form and size

In addition to what their rather strict definition, GPPNs also tend to exhibit the following traits:

- Structured informality and loose alliances: GPPN members are often linked quite informally, with the expectation that mutual interest in the shared policy goal will provide adequate incentive to keep members actively engaged.
- Leadership and management which embraces “leading from behind”: Those who direct these networks are often exceptional leaders, but more importantly, they are skilled at “leading from behind” and expect that process and participation, and not intensive management, will solve the targeted problem.
- Engagement in a four-stage policy cycle: Reinicke and Deng (2000) have developed a useful construct for thinking of GPPNs as functional bodies – one in which the network is identified in terms of its engagement in a four-stage policy cycle. This cycle begins with the process of *agenda-setting*, in which the GPPN raises awareness around a global policy issue and pushes it onto the global agenda. The cycle then moves to the second process of *negotiation*. Here, the GPPN aims to influence the actual decision-making process – whether an intergovernmental forum, or less formal venues. Next, the GPPN would engage in the process of *implementation*, helping to make negotiated decisions meaningful and adoptable on the ground, whether through education and outreach campaigns, capacity building efforts, monitoring and verification, etc. Finally, the cycle concludes with *policy reformulation and institutional learning*, the stage in which the network assesses what it has accomplished, and refines and redirects its approach, its mode of operation, even its priorities.
- Use of internetworking/communications technology: In general, GPPNs rely heavily on these types of technologies, often in innovative ways, for building the “consensual knowledge” which essentially defines each GPPN.
- Mixed member portfolio – A key GPPN asset, as described by Reinicke and Deng (2000) is that they have often been able to meet the dual challenge of inclusion – North and South, global and local – which has eluded others.

1.3.2 Effectiveness Indicators

Much of that which defines a GPPN – structured informality, dynamic leadership, etc. - is likely to contribute significantly to its effectiveness in comparison to traditional network models. The work of GPPNs is often process-oriented and focuses upon mobilizing and inspiring other organizations to do their work better. In this sense, they can be conceived as “support organizations.” Disentangling their accomplishments from those of others can be difficult.

There has been no thorough analysis of what makes a GPPN effective. Through the analysis undertaken here of active GPPNs and the selection process that has defined their ranks thus far, practice will help to inform theory. Nevertheless, preliminary indicators and questions based on previous analyses can be gathered. These are:

- **Reputation:** A GPPN is a reference point for senior people in very diverse organizations working to address an issue. Do people from various perspectives accord it a good reputation for being fair and making an important contribution to addressing an issue?
- **Leadership:** Skilled management of GPPNs is critical in getting the network off the ground, balancing consultation and process with delivery on network goals, ensuring funds for network operations, maintaining the “structure” of structured informality. Do individuals in this position have strong reputations for working in this manner
- **Inclusivity:** One of the attributes that has set GPPNs apart is their ability to bridge both the North/South and global/local divides. The extent to which a GPPN needs to meet this challenge, and succeeds in doing so, may provide indication of its effectiveness. Are the critical stakeholders in an issue active?
- **Size:** The size in terms of participation in events will indicate that someone sees it as important enough to support and if they are numerous and credible enough participants will provide critical mass to move an issue forward. Are there enough critical stakeholders engaged to do so?
- **Accomplishments:** The GPPNs must have a definable impact upon the issue that they are working on. What are seen (by the GPPN itself and others) as the GPPNs key contributions?
- **Agility:** In order to maintain momentum and responsiveness, GPPNs must be dynamic in both process and structure. Where secretariats exist, they are generally compact and agile. Is the GPPN organizational structure streamlined enough to quickly respond to events and new knowledge?

- **Communications Sophistication:** It is no coincidence that the unprecedented approach and effectiveness of GPPNs arose in parallel with the sophistication of information and communications technologies, which provides these groups with innovative platforms for building the “consensual knowledge” which essentially defines each GPPN. To what extent does a GPPN use such tools?
- **Coordination and Exploitation of Synergies:** The extent to which a GPPN is able to leverage collaboration across sectors may significantly enhance its effectiveness. In the case of tri-sectoral GPPNs, the networks are thought to avail themselves of the distinct, yet complimentary strengths of civil society, business, and state and intergovernmental bodies. Is a GPPN bi-sectoral? Tri-sectoral? What are the inter-sectoral relationships?

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Appendix I: Civil Society – The GPPN Keystone

Though each of the three sectors have been active in global public policy networks, civil society is found to be most reliably at the root of an active GPPN. In fact, even when businesses collaborate they usually do so by forming civil society NGOs. The connections between civil society and the GPPN phenomenon are intrinsic. A look at the recent experience of civil society, taking environmental NGOs as an example, can assist in our understanding of GPPN origins.

Civil society, as a term, is used to define the body of actors that exist outside of the purely governmental and commercial spheres. It is associated with terms such as the independent, volunteer, and third sector; the legal form of non-profit predominates. This meta-sector has existed since the beginnings of society, embodied throughout much of history by religious and guild/labor organizations. In recent years, however, the function, scope and capabilities of civil society have exploded; today, it is both vast and intensely dynamic. Since the 1970s in particular, the ongoing process of political liberalization has fostered rapid growth in civil society - and especially, the growth of non-governmental organizations, both in number and sophistication. (Salamon, 1994) (Salamon, 1999) Simultaneously, the technological revolution has enabled these groups to communicate broadly and freely, to access and disseminate information, and to develop connections and alliances across nations and across sectors. The importance of these groups today - and particularly non-governmental organizations - in public policy-making, can perhaps not be over-emphasized.

For practical purposes, civil society is often divided into three broad groups. First are the scientific or professional organizations, organized around like interests (such as ICSU, the International Council for Science); second, are the groups that provide consultation, information and education (such as Tata Energy Research Institute in India, the International Institute for Environment and Development in the U.K.); third, are the organizations organized for advocacy and activism (such as Third World Network, Greenpeace and Climate Action Network). Each of these groups, to varying degrees, has evolved to play a “watchdog” role - one of the functions that civil society has been most widely recognized for. In this role, civil society groups sound the alert to governments and the general public in situations when an urgent issue of public policy is

recognized.⁵ Though advocacy organizations have tended to serve this role most visibly, research and professional organizations can have similar impact.

Each of these classes has evolved significantly in recent decades, filling different but inter-playing and increasingly powerful roles in the arena of global public policy-making. Additionally, each of these has engaged in the intensifying process of public policy network building.

NGOs, by definition, tend to operate independently of government and even commercial interests, and are thus free to advance purely independent agendas - agendas that tend to be based on the interests of like-minded members, often of the general public. These groups are generally not constrained by bureaucratic or diplomatic frameworks and have thus played a unique, dynamic and increasingly central role in the direction of policy-making processes and in the development of international agreements - from environment, to human rights to trade and beyond. Similarly, more than business, or indeed government organizations, NGOs are generally quite intimately linked to members of the general public and stakeholder organizations joined by similar values and agendas that represent communities of interest. With more modest responsibilities than governments, NGOs are able to represent the agendas of these communities. They therefore, more than any other sector, aim to bring the excluded or marginalized voices into the policy dialogue.

The impact of civil society has for some time been recognized by intergovernmental agencies, perhaps most notably since its energetic and high-profile role in the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment. The 1960s and 70s are recognized as a time when the environmental movement came fully into its own as a sociopolitical force, largely through the effort of civil society, and of non-governmental organizations in particular. In this context, the 1970s were, from the NGO perspective, also a time when real dissatisfaction in the intergovernmental policy-making system began to foment. For this group, the global conferences on environment (1972), women (1975), and habitat (1976) were overly technocratic and of limited value to NGO communities, and they were vocal in their dissatisfaction. In recognition of the potential of

⁵ Examples of this role in practice are the publicity generated by Greenpeace in its response to Northern export of hazardous waste, and the exposure of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment to public scrutiny, spearheaded by groups such as Third World Network

NGOs to aid the policy-making process, these groups were awarded modest access, generally as observers, to the key forums. Partly the result of incremental access such as this, NGOs gathered political momentum during the 1980s.

Of greater importance, however, was the continued growth in number and sophistication of NGOs, particularly in the developing world, which political liberalization and new technologies allowed. By 1980, it was reported by UNEP's NGO coordinator - the Environment Liaison Center - that half of its one thousand members were from less developed countries (Caldwell, 1996). These groups, North and South, began to make intensive use of advances in computer and communication technology, dramatically expanding their capabilities to gather, analyze and disseminate information, as well as to organize.

The UN Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio, 1992, is often recognized as the point at which civil society truly stepped into its role as a sophisticated player in the global decision-making arena. Through its own making, civil society had, by 1992, grown to become a prominent voice and to a large degree was able to influence the tone of the UN Conference on Environment and Development. Over two thousand NGOs were present at UNCED, and more than twenty thousand citizens and activists (French, 2000b). In response, representatives to the Earth Summit put forth the strongest language yet on the role of civil society and the necessity of including and supporting these groups in the pursuit of sustainable development.

In the years since Rio, hundreds of civil society groups, thousands of individuals and large numbers of governmental, intergovernmental, and (to a lesser extent) business actors have collaborated in potentially far-reaching policy processes.⁶ In these processes, the latter have often followed the lead of civil society. From the intergovernmental perspective, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, the Global Environment Facility, the World Bank and the WTO have all developed mechanisms (some in response to intense NGO criticism) through which the NGO community can access and, to varying degrees, interact with them (French, 2000b). Today, tens of thousands of NGOs are engaged in environmental issues and many are linked into increasingly influential networks. In concert with the capabilities of information and

⁶ A key example is the Earth Charter, which sets forth basic ethical principles for a sustainable way of life. The Charter was put forth in Rio, but not adopted. Since then, civil society has been central in establishing an Earth Charter network and generating support, with the aim of UN adoption in 2002.

communication technology, civil society now avails itself of unprecedented capacity – intellectual, organizational, analytical, monitoring, and more - and can be seen as stepping into a truly powerful role.

To date, civil society has configured itself into a dynamic global force that has - in the form of issue based networks - as yet, unrealized potential. Just how powerful a force civil society will prove to be in the implementation of Agenda 21, the Rio Conventions and emerging agreements is likely to depend on the extent to which it is able to advance the ongoing process of GPPN development, and the extent to which it can engage in broader, network-based partnerships with the government and business sectors.