IDOS DISCUSSION PAPER 4/2024

Transnational Cooperation – an Explorative Collection

Sven Grimm & Stephan Klingebiel (Eds.)

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Bonn 2024

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Published with financial support from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW).

Suggested citation:
Grimm, S., & Klingebiel, S. (Eds.) (2024). *Transnational cooperation – an explorative collection* (IDOS Discussion Paper 4/2024). German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). https://doi.org/10.23661/idp4.2024

IDOS Discussion Paper / German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) gGmbH
ISSN 2751-4439 (Print)
ISSN 2751-4447 (Online)
ISBN 978-3-96021-229-4 (Print)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.23661/idp4.2024

Tulpenfeld 6, 53113 Bonn
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https://www.idos-research.de

Printed on eco-friendly, certified paper.

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Abbreviations

AMF	Arctic Mayors' Forum
CSO	civil society organisation
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFI	development finance institution
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ERMES	European Resources for Mediation Support
EU	European Union
G20 / T20	Group of Twenty / Think20
G7	Intergovernmental political and economic forum consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States
GITEWS	German-Indonesian Tsunami Early Warning System
GPEDC	Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IDOS	German Institute of Development and Sustainability
ILO	International Labour Organization
MFF	Multi-Annual Financial Framework
MGG	Managing Global Governance
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDICI	Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe
NGO	non-governmental organisation
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMO	social movement organisation
SP	strategic partnership
SP programme	Strategic Partnerships for Lobby and Advocacy
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Introduction: transnational cooperation – an explorative collection

Sven Grimm & Stephan Klingebiel

Abstract

The present collection of short papers is an experimental, explorative and introspective German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) project on international and transnational cooperation for development and sustainability. It is the product of internal brainstorming discussions at IDOS in mid-2022 that aspired to conduct a preliminary, exemplary mapping of the use of "transnational lenses" and their understandings across various work strands at the institute. This might lead to new questions in our work, or it might simply be an attempt to look at our topics of interest with a different perspective.

Why transnational cooperation as a lens?

The term "common good" aims at the (sustainable) well-being of societies and, by extension, the individuals living in them (Messner & Scholz, 2018). It can be pursued nationally by public actors (governments, their agencies and parliaments), but not exclusively by them, as society is broader than the state administration and the relevant interaction of actors on many levels (particularly the subnational and local levels). Cross-border, if not global interdependencies are a fact of life, summarised under the term "globalisation" (the intensification of cross-border exchanges of goods, services, ideas and human mobility).

Awareness about living in the Anthropocene (UNDP [United Nations Development Programme], 2020), in which human activities have an impact on every part of the planet, makes cooperation even more important, as interconnectivity means that the common good cannot be achieved only at the national level. Public and individual actions – at least in their effects – never fully stop at state borders. At the very least they require coordination, if not cooperation, on a broad range of themes, from pollution mitigation and action against the spread of diseases, to value chains that stretch across borders, as well as ocean governance, climate policy and other actions on the global commons.

The listed examples already showcase the strong need for coordination – if not cooperation or even collaboration – beyond national borders on a broad range of topics, so that one country's well-being interacts positively with the situation elsewhere and does not negatively affect others. Conceptually, the global common good is more than the sum of its parts and will need to not only involve states, but also exceed them (synergies of cross-border and multi-stakeholder cooperation).

Interdependencies in most policy areas require various states' involvement through coordinated policy-making. Yet, non-state actors such as the private sector, civil society organisations (CSOs) and academia, for example, are also needed in multi-stakeholder relations (see the contribution by Furness on state–society relations in the context of social contract debates), as well as individuals. International organisations also often play an important role (see the contribution by Wehrmann and Weinlich). Finding solutions is already a difficult task within clearly delimited groups because of a number of collective action problems (discussed, inter alia, by Olson, 1965, and Ostrom, 1990), and the "orchestration" of actors is an enormous effort (Paulo & Klingebiel, 2016). Yet, the setup becomes much more ambitious for the global common good. Solutions typically need to be cross-border in nature and bring together different types of actors (private and public) from different levels (local, national, regional and global). Finding solutions to transnational challenges requires high-quality cooperation or even collaboration (Chaturvedi et al., 2020), that is, it goes beyond mere coordination of national policy processes.

Against this background, we regard transnational cooperation as a crucial perspective for organising collective action in pursuit of the global common good. Unlike international cooperation, transnational cooperation regularly involves at least one non-public or sub-national actor, that is, it does not exclusively take place in a nation-state world. Not only in this respect is the example of Sámi-EU relations an important illustration (see Götze's contribution).

Transnational cooperation can be well-established or ad hoc, and it can create structures and become institutionalised. It is reality in many ways: The private sector is often organised in transnational forms, and research is not bound to a specific country or academic institution and operates to a large extent in a transnational way. Additionally, transnational actions might not require the systemic coherence of states, but instead require the convergence of interests and agreement on a certain set of norms among actors from different settings and across borders.

The concept of transnational cooperation is not necessarily inherently "good". It is important to question the purpose of transnational cooperation, as it can both foster the global common good and be used for the selfish intents of a narrow set of actors (e.g. lobbying in the interest of profits). It can also become a proxy or disguise for nation-state action. Some networks can act on behalf of a state or with state-like intentions. Historically, transnational activities by private entities were used to expand economically and created precursors to colonial domination, as with merchants' associations that had de facto state-like powers. Organisations such as the Dutch East-India Company or different British "chartered" organisations operated as "company-states" and were intentionally instrumentalised to expand empire (Phillips & Sharman, 2020). Extremist organisations claiming religious legitimacy, such as the "Islamic State", can challenge and try to replace state authority. And certainly, criminal activities can be organised transnationally, with the mafia and transnational gangs (Paarlberg, 2022) providing vivid examples of actions taken *against* the common good; and, for instance, cybercrime, which almost by definition transcends borders (for a definition, see United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, s.a.).

How do we approach the topic?

Our specific angle of enquiry and critical reflection is directed by a global common good lens, that is, beyond the interests of a limited set of actors or individual states. In an explorative approach, we want to pursue the questions of where and how transnational cooperation proves to be effective for transformational policy-making towards the global common good**:**

- Where (thematically) do we observe a particular relevance of non-state actors (with or without an interface to state actors) in cross-border cooperation for the global common good?
- Do we see well-functioning transnational cooperation – and which key structural and/or circumstantial features are deemed relevant for this success? Where do we see the opposite (non-functioning areas of transnational cooperation)?
- What are the relevant mechanisms of coordination/cooperation/collaboration/orchestration (including power aspects and capacities such as individual skills as well as interconnectedness of knowledge systems)?
- How do we address the transnational cooperation dimension in our activities relating to research and policy advice?

In this explorative exercise, we do not claim comprehensiveness. Rather, the aim is to engage in a discussion on our multi-perspectivity at IDOS and start a conversation about our understanding. The present papers consequently do not follow one approach, nor do they constitute a consolidated debate, neither collectively nor individually. They are meant to be contributions for debate and can constitute starting points, not least within our research clusters and across the dimensions of the

IDOS mandate, that is, research, policy advice and training on cooperation for development and sustainability.

The role of development cooperation and beyond development cooperation

In our view, the codification of the "global common good", the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be understood as human-centred approaches informed and sharpened by debates on topics such as "capabilities approach", "human development" and "development as freedom" (Sen, 1989; UNDP, 2020). In many ways the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs illustrate that international cooperation (including development cooperation) remains important.

Within the rationale of the 2030 Agenda, SDG 17 focusses on partnerships and is needed to push for the goals defined in the 2030 Agenda, including SDGs 1 to 16, and the cross-cutting issues ("leave no one behind") as well as the universal nature of the 2030 Agenda. However, for a number of decades (see e.g. Nye & Keohane, 1971), we have known that transnational actors and transnational cooperation are essential to get a better understanding of the challenges (e.g. the transnational character of climate change, conflicts or the Covid-19 pandemic) and solutions (Klingebiel et al., in press; Wehrmann, 2020).

Traditionally, the nation-state and its governments form the most important actors when it comes to cross-border cooperation. This is why international cooperation and all relevant platforms and mechanisms are mainly rooted in nation-states. Cross-border cooperation is accordingly organised. This is true for the traditional way in which countries conduct their relations with other countries, typically in the ministries in charge of foreign affairs. This is also the case with development cooperation. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and its Development Assistance Committee (DAC) invented the concept of official development assistance (ODA) (Bracho, Carey, Hynes, Klingebiel, & Trzeciak-Duval, 2021). Thus, development cooperation is initially a way to create a modality (concessional, respectively grant arrangements) for a purpose-specific (economic and social welfare) and mainly intergovernmental cooperation.

Yet, also in development cooperation, there is a strong need to focus on non-public actors. The private sector, CSOs, academia and the media are among the most important non-public actors (see Gutheil and Nowack's CSO examples; Bergmann, Erforth and Keijzer provide an illustration for the private sector). Many of those actors are transnational in nature, for instance enterprises or philanthropic non-profit institutions. The transnational character of cooperation is to a large extent the reality of cooperation nowadays. At the same time, transnational cooperation is also a requirement for a higher level of effective and inclusive cross-border cooperation.

The perspective of transnational cooperation can be useful for working on concepts in support of the provision of global (or transnational) public goods (Kaul, 2012; Klingebiel, 2018; Nordhaus, 2005). This perspective is essential to design development cooperation's contribution towards furthering a "global common good". Existing forms of development policy and development cooperation need to be part of such an approach. The policy field is crucial for this task, and it offers experience in pursuing an agenda that intentionally goes beyond self-interest and a self-centred perspective. Furthermore, it is used to provide norms and standards for how to organise cooperation (e.g. the ODA definition [with all its limitations]).

Even though development cooperation might form relevant starting points for such a discussion, it is also very clear that the policy field is still biased in favour of government-to-government or at least international cooperation. This is, of course, also due to the fact that ODA is defined as an instrument provided by "official" actors. There is probably no declaration or conference outcome document that lacks an emphasis on non-public actors. However, as we understand, for example,

from the interactions between ODA actors and the private sector, it is difficult in reality to upgrade development cooperation to a level where it can claim to be transnational in nature (see Haug and Taggart's contribution).

The role of knowledge cooperation

Working for the global common good, as a precondition, requires recognition of a community of fate on our planet. We cannot presume that cooperation necessarily builds on the same value system, even though collectively held beliefs shape interests and identities (Finnemore & Sikkink, 2001; Wendt, 1972). An important dimension at work in the global common good thus is the exchange and agreement between diverse actors on what constitutes it, and ideally what to prioritise in addressing specific challenges. The 2030 Agenda, despite imperfections, is the politically agreed embodiment of the global common good. Academic debate needs to critically reflect on the agenda itself. Furthermore, any institute with the vocation to be policy-relevant, such as IDOS, also needs to analyse and critically accompany the implementation of the Agenda. How we interpret certain goals and how we make sense of the synergies and trade-offs between them is an ongoing matter in a dynamic, real world; it requires cooperation beyond disciplinary or professional delineations – and across national borders. This, certainly, is not unaffected by power relations between actors, as research about the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, for example, has highlighted on a number of occasions (Corbera, Calvet-Mir, Hughes, & Paterson, 2016; Ketcham, 2022).

Transnational cooperation is thus both a research topic for IDOS and part of its vocation. Like other academic actors, IDOS engages in, facilitates and nurtures the exchange of views. These allow for the development of ideas about what constitutes the global common good, lead to enquiries on how societies perform while pursuing it and encourage the development of ideas on how best to achieve it.

In its focus on development and sustainability, IDOS needs to work with institutions, interests, mechanisms and policy content, but it is also well-advised to explore underlying norms and knowledge systems and their roles in policy-making. This includes reflecting on the institute's own contributions and position in academic and training relations. A premise of IDOS' work is that collective and transnational joint learning in diverse groups on globally and locally relevant issues can initiate the practice that reinforces cooperation. This includes considerations on power relations, which Ruppel and Schwachula have put at the centre of their contribution to this collection.

If successful, building transnational networks thus serves both a self-interest of IDOS as a research institution operating in epistemic communities, and as a precondition for effective solution-seeking across borders for the global common good. How do our cooperation formats, including our training, create social infrastructure for – and thus contribute to – transnational cooperation? What assumptions is our training based on, and what lessons do we draw from the interactions of different groups? Do we foster transnational cooperation for the global common good? And where are the possible limitations in approaches beyond the mere scale of activities that we need to consider? A number of aspects are reflected in the contributions from our team on knowledge cooperation, understood as (early) career development and networking.

Transnational cooperation as strategic – as opposed to coincidental – interaction occurs "when different actors adjust their activities and behaviour in order to obtain benefits", often in the form of increased knowledge (Vogel, Schwachula, & Reiber, 2019). Through co-creations of knowledge, transnational cooperation can pave the way towards facilitating transformative changes at the global and local levels, referred to as a global epistemic equality (Shamsavari, 2007, in Vogel et al., 2019). As a specific focus in joint knowledge creation, our research thus analyses and identifies the required skills and competences needed in inter- and transnational cooperation, as used by Reiber and Eberz as a starting point for reflections in their contribution to this collection on training formats. For research cooperation, Rafliana and Hernandez provide examples in their contribution.

Interactions that shape the global common good need to consider both institutions and individuals, as well as the systemic context within which both operate. It is important to acknowledge that there is a universe of reasoning as to why globalisation is relevant. This relates to the cultural diversities and different social history contexts (Duscha, Klein-Zimmer, Klemm, & Spiegel, 2018), many of which challenged the way (transnational) cooperation is navigated and interpreted by the different actors and agencies involved (e.g. Benabdallah (2020) on China and its building of knowledge production networks; Fues (2018) on Managing Global Governance). Local and sub-regional issues such as conflicts, political (dis)integrations, migrations, digital communication, environment and poverty are entangled and undetachable in the shaping of global discourse and knowledge. And yet, despite these differences, some lessons can be learnt on how to create and sustain transnational networks, as Johanna Vogel points out in her contribution on lessons from the literature and IDOS' own experiences.

Academic cooperation needs to involve young professionals, both from academia in emerging countries and African states as well as in the areas of political decision-making and civil society, particularly taking into account the increasing influence of think tanks in the Global South. It also requires catalysts to provide a critical and open environment for dialogues and interactions, as these are among the neglected aspects in knowledge creation and knowledge cooperation relations (Lee, Liu, & Wu, 2011). Cooperation enables all actors to gain insights into the common responsibilities but different roles in the global system, the different discourses and logics of action as well as underlying value and belief systems. These insights are crucially important and should be an integral part of the criteria for research excellence, as they are indispensable for a meaningful analysis of and recommendations for the global common good. Consequently, IDOS' activities seek interactions and network-building, both at the individual expert level and at the institutional level, aiming to recognise social challenges from multiple perspectives and to work on them with a view towards cross-regional solutions as well as nurturing global change-making initiatives.

Joint learning experiences in the formats offered by IDOS create strong foundations for networks in different regions, target systems and aim to improve the institute's research, advisory services and training activities in a goal-oriented manner. Joint research and advisory formats with alumni and our network continue beyond the respective course participation. Through policy dialogues and knowledge cooperation (joint knowledge production) in internationally oriented training activities, the institute aspires to facilitate the development of common perspectives and priorities with regard to dealing with global challenges. Knowledge, institutional problem-solving abilities as well as personal skills are developed and trained for together. By networking with trainees and partner institutions and funding innovative projects, actors could generate "catalytic cooperation" (Hale, 2020) for various shared purposes of sustainable development. Eva Lynders argues in her contribution that this enables individuals – often in networks – to engage in transformative change for the global common good.

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Part 1: The role of development cooperation and beyond development cooperation

Legitimacy challenges in inter- and transnational cooperation

Dorothea Wehrmann & Silke Weinlich

Abstract

Inter- and transnational formats of cooperation are increasingly contested at a time when both are needed more than ever to address globally shared challenges. This paper focusses on the origins of contested legitimacy in inter- and transnational cooperation. Legitimacy is understood here not as a quality that an actor possesses or not, but one that results from social processes (see also Tallberg & Zürn, 2019). The paper introduces different formats for inter- and transnational cooperation. First, we show that despite an overall shift towards allowing more transnational actor participation in international decision-making, resistance against meaningful and comprehensive participation remains high among a substantial group of states. Also, among transnational actors themselves, questions concerning access and participation remain disputed. Second, the paper argues that different cooperation formats need to take into account the unequal capacities and capabilities of actors in a more extensive way. To enhance the legitimacy – and potentially also the effectiveness – of cooperation formats, these differences should be considered in institutional set-ups, facilitating not only participation but also real contribution. For this, more attention needs to be paid to the differences also among non-state actors, which are often classified according to their types but take different roles depending on the format of cooperation and the governance levels at which they operate.

Introduction

The need to intensify global cooperation is dramatic. The number of people affected by hunger, disease and violent conflicts has significantly increased, and new scientific evidence illustrates that global warming is occuring much faster than researchers expected just last year[1] (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2022; World Bank, 2022). Since 2015, when the international community agreed on the global goals defined in the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, global challenges multiplied and appear to be even more complex to solve. Before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is particularly the lack of coordination, funding and commitment-dominated discussions that have led to the actions of the contracting parties falling behind their visions. More recently, international cooperation (Chaturvedi et al., 2021) and international organisations (Dingwerth, Witt, Lehmann, Reichel, & Weise, 2019; Steffek, 2003) themselves are increasingly contested, not least because of the rise of authoritarian regimes and populism.

In light of the exacerbating global challenges, one strategy to motivate cooperation has been to intensify collaboration with like-minded partners. In that regard, the G7's aim to set up an intergovernmental Climate Club (G7 Germany, 2022a) is an example of a format originating from "dissatisfaction with the multilateral [UN Framework Convention on Climate Change] process" (Falkner, Nasiritousi, & Reischl, 2021). The Climate Club shall accelerate action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by focussing explicitly on the industry sector (G7 Germany, 2022b). Although this aim supports the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the Climate Club still "faces an international legitimacy deficit", because it is not clear yet how this new and separate format of cooperation will relate to, cooperate with and potentially weaken the existing multilateral climate regime (Falkner et al., 2021).

1 In contrast to the numbers provided by a 2021 UN climate assessment, for example, more recent studies illustrate that the Arctic is warming not twice as fast but four times faster as the rest of the world (Voosen, 2021).

In addition to the formation of new inter-state fora, over the past decades various partnerships with state and non-state actors have formed to tackle shared challenges. The number of public–private partnerships; multi-actor partnerships and platforms; alliances and networks is still growing, and many of them are transnational in scope.[2] These formats of cooperation follow different purposes and operational structures. They range from voluntary arrangements to contractual arrangements, and they differ in their mandates, objectives, structure and levels at which they primarily operate. They follow different internal logics and organising principles, which are shaped by their purposes (knowledge partnerships, partnerships to provide services, etc.) and the types of actors engaged (Wehrmann, 2018). Similar to inter-state fora such as the Climate Club, these partnerships also face legitimacy challenges.[3] In the field of development policy, for example, partnerships with private actors have been formed to increase global investments for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals. Even in initiatives that aim at including small and medium-sized enterprises (Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation, 2022), however, "private-sector voices are dominantly from transnational corporations and the financial sector" (Mawdsley, 2021, p. 52). These settings thus privilege and strengthen the sway of those that already have greater influence and seek to comply with – and tend to prioritise – their own financial logics. At the same time, the effectiveness of these new partnerships is also under debate (see Beisheim & Simon, 2018).

Instead of establishing a new format for cooperation, another strategy to motivate cooperation for tackling shared (global) challenges is to include more actors and enlarge existing inter-state settings, also with non-state actors. Although a larger number of actors engaged generally tends to strengthen the legitimacy of these settings, it also often encourages discussions on their efficiency and effectiveness (Kankaanpää & Young, 2012), the distribution of power in these settings and the need to adapt institutional designs (Knecht, 2020). Similar to the legitimacy challenges experienced in other partnerships – also in fora for cooperation that seek to be inclusive and expand – the unequal capacities and capabilities of actors impede their means to contribute and influence cooperation, and ultimately to identify with results. Consequently, outcomes are likely considered unjust and fail to encourage real (transformative) change.[4]

This paper contributes to the discussion on how legitimacy issues can be addressed in the inter- and transnational formats of cooperation needed for advancing the implementation of the global goals. More specifically, it introduces two cases. A snapshot analysis of the United Nations (UN) and the ongoing process to modernise it and link it with various club formats shows that resistance to opening the UN up to participation of non-state actors remains difficult. An analysis of the Arctic Mayors' Forum (AMF) shows why, in order to advance legitimacy, it is necessary to consider unequal capacities and capabilities of the actors engaged in all kinds of cooperation formats, but also the level of governance at which they operate and, respectively, their relations with other entities.

Opening up the UN: a test case for contested legitimacy

Legitimacy standards for international organisations have shifted towards norms of inclusiveness (Dingwerth et al., 2019). This is also evident at the UN. Since the Earth Summit in Rio, non-state actors have been involved in major UN decision-making processes in the area of sustainable

2 Defined as interactions among actors from different actor groups (including at least one non-state actor) that occur on a regular basis, cross borders but are not global in scope (Albert, Bluhm, Helmig, Leutzsch, & Walter, 2009; Pries, 2010).

3 Legitimacy is understood here as resulting from social processes. In this way, "legitimation occurs through a collective construction of social reality in which the elements of a social order are seen as consonant with norms, values, and beliefs that individuals presume are widely shared, whether or not they personally share them" (Johnson, Dowd, & Ridgeway, 2006).

4 As the example of the Arctic Council illustrates, being granted access to participate in a format for cooperation does not necessarily result in actually being able to contribute substantially to the work of that setting (Knecht, 2020).

development and organised as “major groups and other stakeholders”.[5] In these groups, non-state actors from different states come together and cooperate in order to influence global decision-making. The groups played a particularly prominent role in the negotiations leading up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and are now also extensively involved in the follow-up processes in the High-Level Political Forum (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2021). At the same time, despite opening up to non-state actors, the UN remains the bulwark of national sovereignty. Many states, in particular autocracies like Russia and China, as well as other states from the Global South continue to be eager to restrict the access of non-state actors in negotiations (Beisheim, 2021, p. 15). But states from the Global North, while often encouraging the consultation and input of non-state actors to UN decision-making, are also hesitant to relinquish the primacy of intergovernmental decision-making.

In response to the UN’s 75th anniversary, UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for an overhaul of the UN and presented a plethora of proposals with a view towards an “inclusive and networked multilateralism”, comprised in the report “Our Common Agenda” (United Nations, 2021). In an unprecedented move, the Secretary-General did not shy away from addressing clubs and other governance formats outside of the UN that include many stakeholders, but instead advocated for their greater use in order to implement global goals. Many of the proposals – ad hoc, thematic emergency platforms; a Council on future generations; a biannual summit between the G20, the UN Economic and Social Council, international financial institutions and the UN Secretary-General – go beyond intergovernmental policy-making (see also Schnappauf et al., 2022). The report is an important input into a state-led process that leads up to the Summit of the Future, planned for 23 and 24 September 2024.

Initial member states’ reactions to the recommendations for opening up UN decision-making were mixed, as the consultations in April 2022 showed (President of the UN General Assembly, 2022). Opposition to giving a greater say to non-governmental actors is rooted in concerns about national sovereignty, but also fears that it might open up the UN (even more) to corporate interests. Moreover, non-state actors involved in ongoing UN processes, for example on sustainable finance, were far from embracing ideas for more openness towards external stakeholders and interactions with club formats. They expressed fears that the existing UN processes exhibiting established forms of cooperation with transnational actors might be sidelined by new formats, and that these could also easily be compromised by greater corporate influence (Civil Society Financing for Development Group, 2022). The policy process leading up to the Summit of the Future is unfolding on several tracks and is set to cumulate in a political declaration that might or might not authorise and enable greater participation of non-governmental actors at the UN. The battle over the access and influence of transnational actors is ongoing across all tracks, be it in negotiations on the modalities of the summit – which determine the extent transnational actors can contribute to shaping the input into the summit – or negotiations on the actual content of proposals, such as the establishment of a Youth office and a declaration of future generations.

Non-governmental actors organised as transnational groups have become accepted actors in UN decision-making, although their influence remains contested, and their formal participation rights remain restricted. The Summit of the Future will provide an opportunity to open up the UN to non-governmental actors and bring them into various new governance formats. Yet, given the opposition of states such as Russia and China against greater participation of civil society actors and the overall geopolitical climate, a breakthrough remains rather unlikely. On the one side, such a failure to modernise the UN and institutionalise the problem-solving capacities of transnational

5 Since the first Rio Conference in 1992, nine major groups have played a special role in sustainable development (the number has now increased to 13). These are (1) women, (2) children and youth, (3) Indigenous peoples, (4) non-governmental organisations, (5) local authorities, (6) workers and trade unions, (7) business and industry, (8) scientific and technological community, (9) farmers. “Other stakeholders” were added at the Rio+20 Conference in 2012, including volunteers, persons with disabilities, education institutions and the group on ageing.

actors within its structures seems problematic. On the other side, major legitimacy issues concerning greater stakeholder participation in global governance need to be resolved in order to increase – and not undermine – the legitimacy of the UN in this manner.

Undermining or bridging national governments? Cities alliances and their interactions with international organisations

International organisations such as the UN more often seek to include non-state perspectives in their negotiations. In the specific context of climate governance and for sustainable development approaches, cities, regions and businesses in particular shall "help ensure that global climate efforts are implemented in a way that supports, rather than hinders, local sustainable development" (Kuramochi et al., 2019, p. 6). As transnational actors, "cities alliances" are perceived as carrying a lot of potential to solve global challenges. Yet, their interactions with international organisations are mostly unregulated – also in regions where intensive cooperative structures already exist, as with the Arctic.[6] Moreover, cities alliances are special kinds of non-governmental actors. Different to other non-governmental actors, the collaborating actors here are elected representatives (Wehrmann, Łuszczuk, Radzik-Maruszak, Riedel, & Götze, 2022). It is estimated that nearly 300 city networks exist at present, and most of them unite cities from different countries (Pipa & Bouchet, 2020).

The Arctic Mayors' Forum is an example of a cities network that unites cities located in different countries and seeks to contribute to international cooperation. Due to the rapidly changing environment, and in conjunction with the global urbanisation trend also in the Arctic, cities have been subjects and objects of change and have cooperated bilaterally with twin-cities/ sister-cities for decades.[7] However, with the establishment of the AMF in 2019, a new formal channel for local communities was added to the Arctic's regional governance system. The 14 current municipal leaders from the "Arctic 8" that are engaged in the AMF intensified their collaboration to introduce local knowledge to policy-makers at the national and regional levels, as these policy-makers have often been criticised for neglecting local realities. To "voice their opinion" (Arctic Mayors' Forum, 2022), the AMF, among others, seeks to become an observer to the Arctic Council, which is the

6 In the Arctic, international and transnational cooperation have a comparatively long history. Eight different countries (the Arctic-8) identify as Arctic states (Canada, Denmark because of Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States), of which five are coastal states of the Arctic Ocean (Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Russian Federation, the United States). Particularly the remoteness of the region and environmental challenges (the rapidly melting sea ice caused by climate change) has encouraged intense bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the Arctic-8 since the end of the Cold War but also earlier. Together with non-Arctic countries and non-state actors, the Arctic-8 established formats for economic cooperation (e.g. the Arctic Economic Council), for political cooperation in regional settings such as the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and the Arctic Council, and conducted joint military exercises (NATO and non-NATO related). Moreover, the Arctic regions have been inhabited by Indigenous peoples for millennia. Their traditional lands expand across national borders, and for activities such as reindeer herding, they constantly cross borders. At present, of the approximately four million people inhabiting Arctic areas, 10 per cent are of Indigenous descent. Given the remoteness of the region and the limited infrastructure, particularly in rural areas, also non-Indigenous citizens located in the Arctic regions are used to collaborate across borders. Most recently, for example, during the Covid pandemic, citizens from Greenland regularly flew to Denmark for medical assistance. Also, international flight connections may be required to travel first to a different Arctic country (e.g. from Greenland to Iceland). Particularly economic activities (oil and gas development, tourism and shipping) and research (e.g. the MOSAiC expedition – the Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate) are most often conducted in collaboration with actors based in different countries because of the extensive capacities needed to operate in the Arctic's challenging environment on land and at sea (the Arctic Ocean used to be covered by ice throughout the year).

7 Among others, Rovaniemi and Kiruna since 1950, Anchorage and Tromsø since 1969, Luleå and Murmansk since 1972.

main intergovernmental forum in the Arctic, with transnational cooperation being an essential part of the Arctic Council's DNA.[8]

The Arctic Council's mandate[9] covers the main drivers of change for Arctic municipalities. However, on 3 March 2022 the Arctic Council decided to pause all official meetings for the very first time due to the war in Ukraine. On 8 June, the "Arctic 7" (all Arctic states minus Russia) declared "a limited resumption" of their work in the Arctic Council "in projects that do not involve the participation of the Russian Federation" (US Department of State, 2022). Given these circumstances, it is not clear yet whether or not the AMF will pursue its application for observer status to the Arctic Council. In general, the Arctic Council is a rather inclusive setting for cooperation that has grown continually since its establishment in 1996. Particularly Indigenous organisations have a unique say in the Arctic Council, even though only Arctic states have voting rights. As permanent participants, Indigenous organisations obtain full consultation rights.[10] Indigenous citizens represented by Indigenous organisations thus have a greater say than non-Indigenous citizens do. Even if they are granted observer status, the cities members to the AMF will have a more limited means than permanent participants to influence policy-making in the Arctic Council.

For the discussion of legitimacy in inter- and transnational cooperation, the example of the AMF is telling for three reasons. *First*, it shows that cities alliances are special kinds of non-state actors that are likely to obtain greater legitimacy than other non-state actors if their representatives are elected. Yet, the activities of transnational cities alliances are not driven by public mandates or state policies. Instead, they result from the negotiations among the cities that are members to it, even though the mayors engaged may push positions in accordance with national policies and in consideration of electoral cycles. Cities alliances are thus embedded "within a number of political dynamics that have important bearing on whether and to what extent they will make a difference" (Gordon & Johnson, 2018, p. 37).

Second, the Arctic municipalities engaged in the AMF exemplify the different means they have to influence policy-making at the regional and global levels. These means are determined by their individual capacities and capabilities and also by national governments. To contribute to policy-making at the regional and global levels, municipal leaders either use their channels via the national government or participate in alliances across borders, such as the AMF. This unformalised and unstructured process privileges municipal leaders with good networks and the capacities to prepare for, travel to and engage in meetings far from their municipalities. As the development of the AMF also illustrates, smaller cities are more likely to be left behind (Wehrmann et al., 2022), limiting the representativeness and legitimacy of the forum.

Third, for Arctic municipalities – with a public mandate to represent Indigenous and non-Indigenous citizens in the Arctic regions – membership to transnational cities alliances seems promising in helping to "make the voices [of their citizens] heard" across governance levels. Also, the growing number of cities alliances worldwide mirrors this expectation of gaining visibility and influence when

8 Since the establishment of the High-Level Forum in 1996, Indigenous organisations have been included in policy-making as permanent participants with full consultation rights in all negotiations and decisions of the Arctic Council. The Arctic Council has significantly grown since, and before 24 February 2022, the eight Arctic Council member states and six permanent participants collaborated with 13 non-Arctic states and 25 non-governmental, intergovernmental and interparliamentary organisations holding observer status to the Council.

9 To promote "cooperation, coordination and interaction among the Arctic states, with the involvement of the Arctic indigenous communities and other Arctic inhabitants on common Arctic issues, in particular issues of sustainable development and environmental protection in the Arctic" (Government of Canada, 2022).

10 International organisations and the agreements negotiated under their auspices (e.g. the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, 1989, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP, 2007) support this unique inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in Arctic policy-making.

participating in these networks. However, the case of the AMF exemplifies that – even in regions shaped by long-lasting and multiple forms of inter- and transnational cooperation – having local perspectives systematically considered in regional and global policy-making is not a given. Even if the Arctic Council resumes its operations and the AMF is granted observer status, it is very likely that the AMF – similar to most other observers in the Arctic Council – will not be able to make significant contributions to the work being conducted by the Council. In order to represent the citizens of the Arctic municipalities that are members of the AMF in all working groups, the Arctic Council would have to adapt its institutional design and support the inclusion of non-state actors by empowering them with mechanisms that consider the different capacities and capabilities of non-state actors.

Conclusion

There is broad acceptance that a more representative inclusion of non-governmental actors and more transnational exchanges are needed to develop more holistic approaches in policy-making (Horner & Hulme, 2017), and that they can also contribute to the effectiveness of international organisations (Sommerer, Squatrito, Tallberg, & Lundgren, 2021). Yet, this broad acceptance – which also guides the intentions for reform expressed by the UN Secretary-General in the “Our Common Agenda” report – does not translate smoothly into efforts to modify existing institutions, as the debate on how to organise and implement the reform of the UN shows. Interestingly, although the rifts between those states that favour the participation of transnational actors in decision-making and those that seek to preserve intergovernmental prerogatives will shape the future of UN reform to a great degree, transnational actors themselves also hold different viewpoints on how their access should be guaranteed and regulated. These differences among transnational actors become even more important in the second case that we analysed. Cities alliances have become as “important as transnational actors in global governance” (WBGU, 2016, p. 106). For international organisations aiming to advance and coordinate their collaboration with transnational actors such as cities alliances, the case of the AMF shows that cities alliances need to be treated similarly to multi-actor partnerships. Even though they are not composed of different types of actors, the cities engaged in alliances have different means to influence policy-making and follow different interests. ILO Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples illustrate that international agreements have a great potential to legitimise (transnational) non-state actors in policy-making. The case of transnational cities alliances such as the AMF shows, however, that any international agreement envisioned to strengthen the introduction of local perspectives to global policy-making runs the risk of privileging particularly the capacity-strong members that are already shaping transnational networks as well as national and global policy-making. To provide a greater say for local perspectives, which are still often left unconsidered, it thus seems to be useful for international organisations to not only facilitate their participation, but also to seek real contributions in policy-making processes.

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The involvement of the private sector and other non-state actors in EU development policy: current ambitions and directions

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Abstract

The European Union (EU) is a unique cooperation actor that, together with its 27 member states, is the largest provider of official development assistance (ODA). This contribution describes the overall place and role of the EU and discusses two specific trends that reflect its current approach to respond to global challenges: a strong focus on promoting external investment in cooperation with the private sector, and a focus on multi-stakeholder approaches, the latter with a focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities. Taken together, the two trends represent a stronger focus on transnational cooperation with, and through, non-state actors. Such a shift requires important investments on the part of the EU to understand business climates, investment as well as a more networked understanding of both local and international civil society organisations (CSOs). Although the EU is well-placed to navigate the transitions that are required, this transnational approach may also entail a reduced role for the state or sub-national actors, which, in turn, comes with additional costs – and might even have negative effects on specific stakeholder groups. Particularly in the case of cooperation in non-conducive and fragile contexts, the EU needs to adequately invest in continuous monitoring and evaluation processes that reflect its willingness to learn from both success and failure.

Introduction

The EU is neither a state, nor an intergovernmental organisation. Its progressive and ongoing process of broadening and deepening integration – with the concept of "subsidiarity" capturing the overall idea that member states willingly transfer policy competence to the EU level for collective and mutual benefit – makes the EU a unique actor in transnational cooperation. To achieve the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which build on the aspiration of wanting to strengthen the world's common good, it requires well-functioning transnational cooperation partnerships. Such well-functioning partnerships, as Grimm and Klingebiel (see introduction) point out, must be multi-stakeholder in nature. The EU itself – being a supranational organisation "sui generis" – contains multi-stakeholder, transnational platforms within its institutional DNA and is therefore well-placed to advance a global transnational cooperation agenda.

While the EU avails of "common policies" in areas including trade and agriculture policy, in the field of development policy, EU institutions and its member states maintain parallel competences. Under this arrangement, the member states mandate and empower the EU as a distinct actor that – according to the EU Treaty – complements the development policy operations of the member states, and vice versa. This institutional skill set is applied to a manifold of geographic and sectoral engagements, two of which are analysed in this contribution.

The EU operates with a seven-year budget cycle known as its Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MFF). Under the current MFF, the most relevant budgetary instruments for international cooperation include the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI, also referred to as "Global Europe instrument") with a budget of EUR 79.5 billion for the period 2021-2027 (see Burni, Erforth, & Keijzer, 2021). As per its legal basis, at least 93 per cent of that total budget *"*[…] should contribute to actions designed in such a way that they fulfil the criteria for ODA*"*, that is, a minimum of EUR 73.9 billion (European Union, 2021, preamble 21). In

addition to the NDICI, the EU avails itself of the Instrument of Pre-Accession, which supports reforms in the so-called enlargement region with financial and technical assistance at a total budget of EUR 14.2 billion for the current MFF, and the intergovernmental European Peace Facility with an initial EUR 5.7 billion budget to support peace operations outside the EU's borders during the same period. The budget of the European Peace Facility has meanwhile more than doubled as a result of the central role it plays in the EU's response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine (European Commission, s.a.).

The EU's considerable international cooperation budget surpasses the individual bilateral development cooperation resources of its member states, with Germany being the sole exception; see the preliminary ODA statistics for 2021 (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2021). This considerable budget will be used for grant-based financing and includes an earmarked budget of EUR 1.4 billion for support to CSOs, which in addition are also eligible to implement relevant projects under the instrument's geographic and thematic strategies. The available financial resources under the instrument are also used in the form of "blended finance" to leverage and guarantee public and private investment in developing countries. Both aspects – the involvement of CSOs and the use of public finance to stimulate private investments – lend themselves as exploratory cases to further delve into the question of how well the EU can perform in a world where the ability to effectively engage in transnational cooperation has become key to success and – maybe even – survival.

It should be noted that the features of the EU's current international cooperation framework represent a relatively recent and rather fundamental departure from the EU's past approach and emphasis. Although the support to CSOs was an early feature of the EU's development cooperation when it started in 1979 (Keijzer & Bossuyt, 2020), such support continued with a relatively low-profile and at a limited scale compared to the dominant focus on direct cooperation with third-country governments. Past development policy debates emphasised the EU's ability to predictably provide grant-based financing over longer periods of time, and the EU was known for its investments into public infrastructure (also linked to "aid for trade") as well as its provision of budget support (Bergmann, Delputte, Keijzer, & Verschaeve, 2019).

This predominant "statist" and grant-based cooperation focus particularly changed following the advent of the global financial and economic crisis in September 2008. It has been expressed as two main shifts, which we briefly introduce here and then explore further in turn. The first shift considers a stronger focus on the productive sector and the investment promotion of both public and private actors. After having provided short-term-oriented fiscal support, in 2011 the EU adopted new development policy preferences with a stronger focus on the private sector (Bergmann et al., 2019). Today, this has evolved into the mobilisation of investment being among the key priorities of the EU's development policy, backed by its conviction that public finance alone can never be sufficient to realise the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as well as its very own liberal identity, which values the power and positive impact of entrepreneurship and private capital.

A second important shift concerns the EU's efforts to diversify its international partnerships. These partnerships, such as the well-known partnership agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific states and the various bilateral association agreements, typically are agreed with states, as these are the only ones legally able to enter into international agreements. The agreements themselves and the dialogue structures around them, however, increasingly emphasise and promote the participation of non-state actors, with the EU being a pioneering actor in terms of introducing such dialogue structures in the 1970s. The increasing focus on working with non-state actors – either directly or qua intermediaries such as public development banks – goes beyond development policy in a strict sense, as it has also become more prominent in the EU's support to conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Using EU ODA to mobilise private investment for “hard to invest” places

Climate change, migration, poverty conflicts and demographic challenges are steady preoccupations of decision-makers in Brussels and beyond (European Commission, 2018). These developments coincide with a continuous stagnation in ODA budgets over the past years, showing the limits of what public funds can achieve in an unstable world. Together – and in light of the annual investment gap for development of USD 2.5 trillion – these factors have induced a fundamental shift in the way development cooperation is framed today. The adoption of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda in 2015 institutionalised the popular narrative of private-sector solutions for sustainable development. The signatories agreed that private-sector investments are to compensate for the lack of public funds necessary to achieve the SDGs. To incentivise private-sector investments, national, international and supranational actors alike rely on an increasingly complex web of financial instruments that are aimed at mitigating private risks and creating an environment conducive to sustainable investments, innovation and entrepreneurship.

By shifting investors’ perceptions of “risks versus potential returns, blending is viewed as a means of tapping into new resources” (Lundsgaarde, 2017, p. 5). Next to its promise to leverage additional investments with a limited amount of public funds, blending is also cherished for improving the quality of financed projects by allowing for a knowledge exchange between development actors and investors. In addition, blending may further the coordination between large bilateral and multilateral development finance institutions (DFIs) and EU institutions (Lundsgaarde, 2017). Greater coherence among European DFIs, in turn, is hoped to increase the visibility of European action abroad (Erforth, 2020). In particular, in light of China and other external actors’ rising – and rivalling – activism and its growing investments in Africa, the EU is inclined to view a coherent development finance system as part of a broader toolbox to support sustainable development in Africa and defend European stewardship in the international system. This element of geopolitical competition was also emphasised in the EU’s 2021 Global Gateway proposal to ramp up global infrastructure investments (Furness & Keijzer, 2022). This last point is interesting, insofar as the activation of non-state actors serves the purpose of strengthening (state) sovereignty.

The EU’s increased attention on the private sector is in line with a general shift in the global development finance landscape. Accordingly, the role of DFIs has been strengthened, as their lending volume has increased. Today, development banks create an ever-greater number of financial instruments that in one way or another serve as guarantees or securities to potential private investors. In theory, this approach is well-suited to mobilise additional finance and overcome old dependencies. In practice, however, it has also resulted in shifting the attention from least-developed and fragile states to middle-income countries, where the impact of public guarantees and the likelihood of such guarantees helping to generate bankable projects that will attract investors are reckoned to be greater. The shift away from international to transnational cooperation, hence, might be detrimental to the world’s poorest countries and effectively undermine the poverty eradication agenda (Attridge, 2019).

The focus on blending and private-sector support, paired with its criticism, begs two sets of questions: i) What impact and/or leveraging effects do blending mechanisms have? And ii) What is or ought to be the role of the state and public institutions in the area of development finance? Critics maintain that existing blending operations do not come close to reaching the promised leveraging effect, pointing to trade-offs between blending and other “development-oriented interventions that could have been funded with the same resources” (Lundsgaarde, 2017, p. 11).

To successfully contribute to the changing nature of development cooperation, the EU needs to find the right balance between the various instruments available and engage in context-specific measures. For the former, a more advanced evaluation of blending mechanisms and the achieved results is necessary. For the latter, concessional loans and guarantees must stand the test of generating both financial and developmental additionality within the contexts they are applied to (see

also Furness & Keijzer, 2022). An outright rejection of new forms of public–private transnational cooperation partnerships is not an option – due to the above-mentioned financing gap as well as the necessity to think and act “beyond aid”.

In sum, transnational cooperation partnerships between a multitude of private and public stakeholders are a necessity in the area of financial cooperation. Better frameworks that serve as a measuring threshold need to be put in place. These can only be developed together with partner countries and/or partner organisations, which makes the assessment itself a form of transnational cooperation. The same is true for the second requirement, which asks European development finance to identify the right instruments that speak to the economic, social and political differences between and within countries. Only by listening to the existing variety of voices can this exercise succeed.

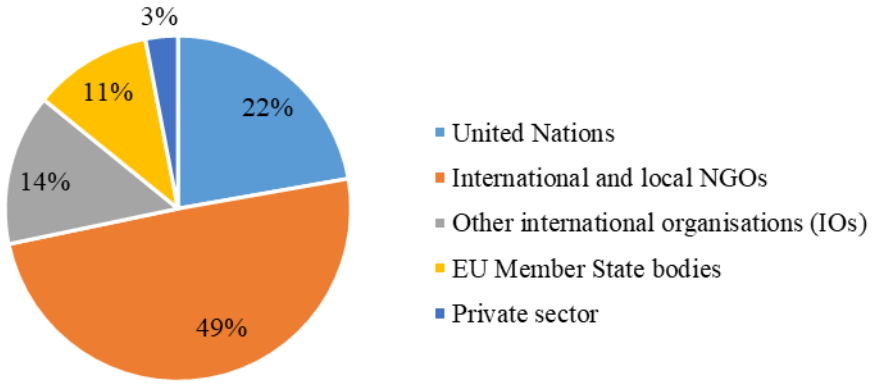
Europe’s cooperation with CSOs in conflict prevention and peacebuilding

A significant share of EU activities targeting conflict-affected countries and their populations draws on intermediary actors to prevent and resolve conflict and build peace. Many of those intermediary actors are CSOs. Before the creation of the NDICI/Global Europe instrument in 2021, the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) had been the EU’s main financial instrument to fund support in the fields of crisis response, conflict prevention and peacebuilding, with a financial envelope of EUR 2.3 billion for the period between 2014 and 2020.

Through the IcSP, the EU funded a wide array of conflict prevention and peacebuilding-related activities, ranging from mediation and dialogue, security-sector reform, transitional justice, support to the implementation of the UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), demining actions and counter-terrorism activities.

According to an analysis of 268 IcSP projects between 2014 and 2017, almost half of them were implemented by international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (49 per cent), followed by UN organisations (22 per cent), other international organisations (14 per cent), EU member state bodies and agencies (11 per cent) and the private sector (3 per cent). Focussing on partners that implemented the largest share of IcSP funding, UN organisations come out top (32 per cent), closely followed by international and local CSOs (31 per cent), other international organisations (19 per cent), EU member state bodies and agencies (15 per cent) and the private sector (4 per cent) (Bergmann, 2018, pp. 15-16; see Figure 1). In other words, non-state actors (international organisations, CSOs, private sector) are the largest group among the implementing agents of IcSP projects, and within this group, CSOs stand out as the most frequent cooperation partners of the EU.

Figure 1: Distribution of IcSP projects per implementing partner



Source: Bergmann (2018, p. 16)

Zooming onto the group of international and local CSOs as implementation partners in 130 out of 268 projects, we find a wide variety of organisations in terms of the specific focus of their activities and their geographical scope. A local civil society actor such as the Conférence Episcopale Nationale du Congo, which focusses on one particular conflict, and an internationally operating NGO such as International Alert are just two examples of a wide continuum of various types of organisations that have received EU funding through the IcSP. Whereas most actors only implemented one to a maximum of two projects within the investigation period, four international CSOs stand out as the most frequent implementers: The Centre Henry Dunant pour le Dialogue Humanitaire (7 projects), the Danish Refugee Council (6), Search for Common Ground (5) and International Alert (5).

Apart from projects implemented by individual CSOs, the IcSP also funded larger consortiums consisting of several organisations to carry out specific tasks, thus facilitating transnational cooperation between several non-state actors. One example in this regard is the European Resources for Mediation Support (ERMES) project, which facilitates EU support to third parties engaged in mediation and dialogue processes. In its third project phase from 2018 to 2024, it has been implemented by a consortium under the leadership of the College of Europe. It involves specialised organisations and institutes such as the European Forum for International Mediation and Dialogue (mediatEUr); Interpeace; the European Centre for Electoral Support; Fondation Hirondelle; and the Institute of Research and Education on Negotiation (ESSEC-IRENE). The consortium established a pool of mediation experts who can be deployed to conflict situations on very short notice if the EU mandates them to do so. Through ERMES, the EU is able to deliver support to peace processes within 48 hours after the emergence of a crisis. Interestingly, ERMES support can be requested by any EU foreign policy body, including EU delegations, the European External Action Service, the Directorate-General for Development and Cooperation, and EU Special Representatives and Envoys (College of Europe, 2019). The example of ERMES shows that the EU is not only interacting with NGOs and/or CSOs on a bilateral basis, but also funds larger consortia of various organisations. Thus it “orchestrates” NGO-NGO collaboration through EU funding mechanisms, which provide collective resources that can, in turn, again be utilised by EU institutions.

In sum, this brief empirical overview of the EU’s cooperation practices indeed shows that transnational cooperation, that is, cross-border interaction beyond public national actors, is at the heart of the EU’s approach to conflict prevention and peacebuilding. The benefit of the EU’s transnational cooperation with local and international NGOs and CSOs in situations of fragility and conflict-affected countries – which often takes place in parallel to interaction with state actors – lies in the unique resources that these actors possess and that can be leveraged through transnational cooperation with the EU. Local CSOs often have preferential access to conflict zones and parties, and they possess rich knowledge of the dynamics “on the ground”. In situations where cooperation with governments or other national public actors in conflict-affected countries might be difficult or stalled, transnational cooperation has the potential to open new pathways for conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts beyond traditional state-to-state diplomacy.

Moreover, transnational cooperation allows the EU to become engaged in conflict theatres – and with conflict parties – where it does not want to become officially recognised for its direct engagement. For example, when interacting with proscribed non-state armed groups or terrorist organisations (such as Hamas or the Houthi in Yemen), the EU often engages with and through local and international NGOs and CSOs, which then establish interactions with those groups and organisations (Müller & Cornago, 2019). Finally, transnational cooperation for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries strengthens the legitimacy of the EU as an international actor and as a force for the global common good because it acknowledges that sustainable peace can only be built through multi-stakeholder approaches that involve non-state actors at all levels of society.

Conclusion: trends and learning needs

The EU is both well-endowed and well-placed to facilitate transnational cooperation, but it faces the challenge of effectively allocating resources to a growing number of global challenges. Two trends reflect its current approach to addressing such challenges effectively: a strong focus on promoting external investment in cooperation with the private sector, and a focus on multi-stakeholder approaches, the latter with a focus on conflict prevention and peacebuilding activities.

The greater focus on non-state actors in today's EU international cooperation – both as an aim in itself and as a "channel" for project delivery – requires important investments on the part of the EU to understand business climates, investment as well as a more networked understanding of both local and international CSOs. The two trends suggest that the EU is well-positioned to navigate the present-day global system, in which cooperation is no longer international, but transnational. Yet, we can also see that a reduced role for the state or sub-national actors sometimes comes with additional costs and might even have negative effects on specific stakeholder groups. Rather than reject the new nature of cooperation, the EU needs to make sure that these negative impacts are mitigated by public policy.

As part of the ongoing "Team Europe" efforts to promote joint action between the EU and its member states, all actors involved should engage in further knowledge-sharing and direct cooperation on realising such ambitious cooperation programmes with the limited human resources they have available. Moreover, in order to successfully mitigate any associated risks – especially in the ambitious field of promoting external investment in non-conducive investment climates – adequate investments in continuous monitoring and evaluation processes are needed. They would reflect the openness of the EU to learn from both success and failure.

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Transnational cooperation and social contracts

Mark Furness

Abstract

Social contracts govern the core of state–society relations. In the West, the social contract concept has been debated among political philosophers and social scientists since the Enlightenment and the work of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau (Morris, 2000). Early conceptualisations focussed on relationships between the individuals that make up a society and their relationships with the sovereign. However, the social contract is not just a Western philosophical concept setting out an ideal form of socio-political and economic organisation. Indeed, as Nyabola (2021) points out, non-Western ideas and traditions have helped shape the understanding of the social contract. At its most basic level, the social contract captures why people consent to be governed, why rulers place limits on their arbitrary power, how societies that people want to live in are organised, and how individuals and groups cooperate to ensure collective security and welfare. Governments can rule by repression rather than by consent, but they rarely succeed in the long run without at least some legitimacy emanating from a social contract. The universality of social contracts and their central role in deciding who gets what and why makes them highly relevant for development policy and transnational cooperation.

What is a "social contract"?

A social contract can be operationalised as an analytical framework to help understand how a society ticks, and why. For the purposes of analysis, the social contract can be defined as "the entirety of explicit or implicit agreements between all relevant societal groups and the sovereign (the government or any other actor in power), defining their rights and obligations towards each other" (Loewe, Trautner, & Zintl, 2019). Furthermore, these rights and obligations can be identified in accordance with the "3Ps": the sovereign must deliver *protection* to citizens; it must provide goods, services and opportunities (*provision*); and it must enable a degree of citizen *participation* in public life and in decision-making. Citizens must accept the sovereign's rule, including by fulfilling certain obligations, such as paying taxes, respecting laws and institutions, and contributing to public life. They must also be content to live peacefully with each other. The state's failure to deliver one or more of the 3Ps leads sooner or later to societal discontent and political instability.

The social contract has a transnational dimension. Although social contracts are national agreements that come about via specific societal processes, they rarely take place in isolation from other countries and societies. Both states and societal actors interact with and are influenced by others from outside their borders. This transnational aspect is of crucial importance to how social contracts develop and evolve. Transnational interactions that touch on the social contract can be highly sensitive, particularly in authoritarian contexts.

The social contract, development and transnational cooperation

Functioning, legitimate social contracts are key to social cohesion, which in turn is crucial for successful socio-economic development. On a practical level, the social contract codifies the "rules of the game" with regard to social, political and economic interactions, including core aspects such as who gets what and why. The social contract is therefore a key factor in determining the success or failure of cross-border interactions, including international development cooperation.

Although international actors can normally not define or dictate another country's social contract (and efforts to do so usually create conflict and intervention quagmires, such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Ukraine), they can help strengthen certain aspects by supporting particular

processes. International partners can, for example, help state and/or societal actors to deliver on their sides of the bargain by supporting one or more of the 3Ps. International actors can also act as spoilers, undermining or even destroying existing social contracts, or attempting to shape them in accordance with their own interests.

It is therefore imperative from both a development effectiveness perspective and a moral standpoint that interventions which aim to influence or attempt to change aspects of a country's social contract respect core development cooperation principles: the focus on poverty, national ownership of key decisions and processes, transparency and accountability on the part of all, and that interventions "do no harm".

Using the social contract as an analytical lens can, therefore, increase understanding of where donors should focus their engagements, and also of what they should avoid doing.

The 3Ps framework outlines (or provides categories for) the "deliverables" that are "exchanged" by the state and society under a social contract[11]:

- The state should provide public goods, such as national and human security ("protection").
- The state should also provide institutions, opportunities and services, such as health care and education ("provision").
- The state should enable "participation" by protecting citizens' rights, such as the right to engage in political decision-making, the right to justice, freedom of expression, and religious and personal freedoms.
- Society, both at the level of social groups and individuals, should grant recognition to the state as a sovereign entity and support the state by paying taxes, respecting laws and participating in public affairs.

Changes in the 3Ps can be assessed in Pareto terms: They should at least make nobody worse off, and ideally make many citizens, social actors and structures better off. Pareto-improving social contract reforms contribute to all aspects of social cohesion: vertical trust (in the government), horizontal trust (in the members of other groups of society), feelings of belonging and readiness to engage as citizens for the common good (Burchi, Strupat, & von Schiller, 2020). Assessing interventions in this way can show if cooperation has respected core development principles with regard to the social contract.

Implications for development policy-making

The social contract offers an analytical perspective, a framework for identifying entry points and a set of standards for principled cooperation. The social contract lens shows how the 3Ps work together as a framework for long-term social cohesion, peaceful relations and political stability. The social contract has a transnational dimension, in that it involves state and non-state actors, its formation and evolution is influenced by external actors and forces, and these influences can have positive or negative effects in Pareto terms. Shifting the emphasis of donor engagement to the social contract has several implications for transnational cooperation and development policy.

First, using the social contract as an analytical lens helps to conceive transnational cooperation in a holistic and long-term manner. This is especially relevant for designing technical and financial cooperation programmes that aim to build genuine social, political and economic resilience. Sometimes donor countries face contradictions between their own short-term goals and the longer-

11 Some aspects of a social contract are formalised, such as in constitutions, legislation, jurisprudence and other kinds of written agreements. Other aspects remain implicit in the form of mutual understandings that permeate a society.

term needs of partners. Focussing cooperation on social contracts would help overcome conflicts of interest on the part of donors, especially those that have driven initiatives that target short- to medium-term goals, such as migration management.

A second implication is the need to diversify the partners of development cooperation, while being aware of the risks, especially in authoritarian contexts. Donors must secure the buy-in of the state where possible in order to secure the cooperation of those able to either facilitate or block reforms. This is not always easy in conflict-affected countries, especially where the "state" may mean local or municipal administrations because the national government is compromised by its engagement in conflict. Development cooperation invariably contributes to strengthening the state, and often at the expense of society (or at least of marginalised groups within it). Indeed, focussing exclusively on state partners risks reproducing socio-economic and power inequalities, and thereby reinforcing conflict, fragility or patterns of exclusion that weaken the social contract (Furness & Houdret, 2020). In the short run, this may stabilise the political order so that economic and security cooperation can continue. However, its longer-term effects can be fundamentally destabilising as social dissatisfaction with the status quo builds, resulting in pressure on the political and economic elite (Furness & Loewe, 2021). Nevertheless, in authoritarian contexts, external support for non-state actors can be seen as a violation of sovereignty. Considering the implications of transnational cooperation for the social contract can help development policy-makers think about this dilemma in a more structured way.

A third implication is that "classic" technical and financial development cooperation still has an important role to play. Development cooperation that focusses on the 3Ps could support reforms that improve the well-being of citizens, but which are still acceptable to governments – for example, improvements in health care and education, especially in rural areas; greater transparency in administrative processes; targeted social assistance to replace energy subsidies; or more equitable access to justice. Strengthening the capacity of stakeholders and institutions to plan strategically for economic and political transformation, and underpinning local priorities with international expertise, are transnational processes that development cooperation can support.

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Transnationalisation light: non-state inclusion and North/South differentials in global development governance

Sebastian Haug & Jack Taggart

Abstract

Global development governance has traditionally been dominated by states. Recent trends towards transnationalisation and multi-stakeholderism, however, emphasise non-state actor inclusion in more horizontal structures. This paper investigates the extent of genuine transnationalisation in global development governance, focussing on the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC) as an ambitious attempt at transnationalisation. Although we find that the GPEDC demonstrates a strong commitment to formally incorporating non-state actors, (wealthy) states continue to wield decisive influence. Despite apparent inclusivity, we observe a condition we term "transnationalisation light": the limited realisation of substantive non-state stakeholder inclusion. Notably, power imbalances persist between and among state and non-state actors, often favouring Northern stakeholders and exacerbating evolving North/South divisions.

Introduction

Historically, global development governance has been dominated by state actors. As a club of major Northern donors, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has taken a particularly central role in defining and coordinating cooperation mechanisms, reporting and standards (Bracho, Carey, Hynes, Klingebiel, & Trzeciak-Duval, 2021).[12] Recently, however, trends towards transnationalisation through multi-stakeholderism have emerged, emphasising the inclusion of non-state actors in global development governance within more inclusive and horizontal institutional forms (see Reinsberg & Westerwinter, 2021). This paper investigates the extent of transnationalisation in global development governance: whether current governance arrangements embody a genuine commitment to transnationalisation via the meaningful inclusion of non-state actors in major coordination and decision-making processes. We focus on the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation (GPEDC), an ambitious effort to transnationalise this field (see Mawdsley, Savage, & Kim, 2014; Taggart, 2022). Our findings reveal that although the GPEDC demonstrates a strong commitment to formally incorporating non-state actors, states – predominantly wealthy ones – still control the inner workings of the partnership. We call this "transnationalisation light": though formally inclusive, global development governance falls short of meaningfully integrating non-state stakeholders in practice. Power disparities between and among state and non-state actors persist, often favouring Northern stakeholders over their Southern counterparts, while reflecting and exacerbating evolving North/South divisions.

1. Championing transnationalisation: multi-stakeholderism and non-state inclusion at the GPEDC

The push for multi-stakeholderism in global governance emerged in the 1990s, particularly through efforts to promote non-state engagement within environmental fora at the United Nations (UN) (McKeon, 2017). Alongside neoliberal concepts of private or self-regulation, multi-stakeholder

12 The empirics discussed in this piece draw on a more extensive working paper entitled "De jure and de facto inclusivity in global governance: Unpacking stakeholder inclusion in global development partnerships"; see also Haug and Taggart (2023).

partnerships ostensibly offered more effective and legitimate governance by including a wider array of stakeholders (Berman, 2017). Proponents have argued that incorporating private and civic entities beyond states enhances core governance functions such as deliberation, learning, transparency, efficiency and resource mobilisation (Bäckstrand, 2006).

The rise of multi-stakeholder partnerships thus constitutes a process of transnationalisation across policy fields: the inclusion of non-state actors in arrangements once reserved for (inter-)governmental bodies. In this paper, we define meaningful transnationalisation as the participation of non-state actors as equals, or at least through mechanisms ensuring that non-state voices are integral and indispensable in key decision-making processes. Within global development governance – that is, the coordination and direction of development cooperation efforts worldwide – transnationalisation through multi-stakeholderism has potentially transformative consequences, challenging the inter-state logic and centrality of the DAC and UN bodies (Bracho et al., 2021; Esteves & Assunção, 2014) as the primary governance hubs for global development cooperation initiatives.

The GPEDC arguably epitomises the multi-stakeholder trend in global development governance. The Global Partnership presents itself as the "primary multistakeholder vehicle" (GPEDC, s.a.) committed to promoting development cooperation effectiveness. Originating from OECD aid effectiveness processes in the early 2000s, the GPEDC was formally established at a global meeting in Busan in 2011, where a diverse group of stakeholders – including both state and non-state actors – endorsed basic development effectiveness principles (Mawdsley et al., 2014; Taggart, 2022). The GPEDC's governance structure has been characterised as "uniquely inclusive" (Bena & Tomlinson, 2017, p. 2), featuring three co-chairs held by government representatives at the ministerial level (one DAC donor, one recipient and one dual-category country) and a non-executive co-chair representing non-state constituencies, all of whom provide political oversight and leadership. The GPEDC steering committee, in turn, serves as the main decision-making body, guiding and coordinating the work programme and implementation processes, while a joint team from the OECD and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) manages daily operations (GPEDC, s.a.).

The GPEDC highlights that its steering committee "brings together on an equal footing […] developing countries […]; developed countries […]; multilateral and bilateral institutions; civil society; parliaments; local governments and regional organizations; trade unions; private corporations; and philanthropic institutions" (GPEDC, 2016, p. 1). The latter six constituencies operate outside the scope of national governments and are typically classified as non-state actors.[13] They are formally represented, each with one seat, in the 20-member steering committee (10 from governments and four from intergovernmental bodies). Although (inter-)governmental representatives are thus still in the majority in both the co-chair arrangement and the steering mechanism, non-state actors are formally recognised as legitimate actors across the GPEDC governance structure. This is also reflected in stakeholder participation in GPEDC processes. Interviews and participant observations since 2014 suggest that non-state actors have been prominently engaged in GPEDC-related meetings and work streams. Out of 641 participants at a 2019 GPEDC senior-level meeting, for instance, 285 were national government representatives and 59 came from international organisations, while 298 – that is, almost 50 per cent – represented non-state constituencies.[14] Non-state actors have, thus, been an integral part of the GPEDC's processes and global image.

13 Parliaments and sub-national governments are excluded from this analysis, as their standing regarding both capacity- and legitimacy-related questions sets them apart from other non-state actors.

14 Observations made by one of the authors in the run-up to the 2019 GPEDC Senior Level Meeting.

2. The limits of transnationalisation? Non-state inclusion challenges at the GPEDC

Despite the GPEDC's formal governance structure and event participation numbers, the inclusion of non-state actors has been less effective than the rhetorical commitment to multi-stakeholderism implies. Our stakeholder interviews reveal that non-state actors often feel like "second-rate" participants in GPEDC decision-making processes.[15] At least three factors contribute to this dynamic and point to challenges that transnationalisation efforts are likely to confront across the board: substantial capacity differentials that tend to favour (certain) states; representation challenges that undermine the legitimacy of non-state representatives; and the heterogeneity of the "non-state" category that lends itself to selective privileging.

First, most non-state actors, especially civil society representatives and those from the South, struggle to compete with large government bureaucracies in terms of resources and expertise. Funding for the GPEDC comes almost exclusively from Northern governments, either directly or through the OECD and UNDP. The GPEDC relies heavily on a small number of committed donors for its work, including Canada, the European Union (EU), Germany, Ireland, South Korea and Switzerland (OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] & United Nations Development Programme, 2018), giving these governments significant and often decisive influence over most GPEDC-related processes. Although there are also considerable capacity differentials among states, the capacity divide is particularly pronounced between Northern donors and Southern non-state – particularly civic – actors. As a Southern civil society representative noted in an interview, "it is great that […] we have a seat at the table; but [particularly DAC] governments are always going to be more powerful, we just have to accept this."[16] Although not surprising, this emphasises the substantial resource differentials in transnationalisation attempts within global development processes.

Second, complex questions about representativeness challenge the legitimacy of non-state actors as representatives of their constituencies. Although national governments represent internationally recognised states, many non-state constituencies lack stratified representation structures. This raises critical questions about their representation-related roles, such as how global representatives of "civil society", "business" or "private foundations" are selected and held accountable. Within the GPEDC, insecurities stemming from the lack of straightforward representation are evident among non-state agents. A private foundation representative stated in an interview:

> It's difficult for me sitting on the steering committee to say, "I can actually speak for foundations globally", because I don't speak for foundations globally […] it's not always clear […] where are the voices coming from. Is it just the voice of that constituency? Or is it an individual voice that has an opinion?[17]

This lack of representativeness undermines non-state actors' standing from the outset. A government representative commented: "It is great that they [non-state actors] are on board [...] but I don't think they actually speak for a constituency."[18]

Third, and more generally, the "non-state" category is defined by what it is not, that is, "state(s)", and therefore exhibits significant heterogeneity. Some non-state actors, such as large private-sector actors (e.g. Northern business associations and consulting agencies), have considerable

15 Between 2013 and 2019, both authors were embedded in GPEDC-related processes; interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2022 with state and non-state representatives.

16 Interview, civil society representative, February 2017.

17 Interview, private foundations representative, November 2018.

18 Interview, DAC member representative, October 2022.

resources and political influence, while others, such as civil society organisations, often enjoy local legitimacy. At the GPEDC, this leads to tensions, as civil society challenges the role of for-profit entities and Northern donors' favouritism towards larger private actors (Taggart, 2022). As elsewhere, the power differentials among non-state stakeholders at the GPEDC condition how and to what extent constituencies can make their voices heard and effectively co-govern the partnership (Haug & Taggart, 2023). State representatives can often choose whom they want to privilege in their approach to multi-stakeholderism, and for what purpose. Constituencies with fewer financial or institutional resources are more easily side-lined. Hence the increasing financialisation and marketisation of development cooperation further boosts the standing of the private sector (Mawdsley & Taggart, 2021), while civil society fears tokenistic inclusion in processes dominated by Northern donors and corporations.[19]

3. Transnationalisation light: when the state/non-state divide meets North/South divisions

Despite multi-stakeholder rhetoric and institutional expansion, the GPEDC case suggests that global development governance often remains controlled by a limited number of states. Although non-state actors may formally be part of governance processes and visibly participate in meetings and events, their inclusion in major coordination and decision-making processes remains distant: a condition we term "transnationalisation light". As an integral part of these dynamics, insights from the GPEDC reveal that long-standing North/South divisions (Haug, Braveboy-Wagner, & Maihold, 2021) persist alongside the state/non-state divide. Southern representatives – both state and non-state – arguably have a greater voice today than they did in the past, particularly as the recognised owners of national development processes and greater multipolarity may provide development cooperation recipients with more "agency" (Soulé, 2020) in choosing partners and determining development goals. The GPEDC case illustrates, however, how the governance of global development overwhelmingly remains determined by Northern donors and still reflects underlying traditional hierarchies.

Northern states and intergovernmental bodies often dominate debates, coordination processes and resource flows; this is evidenced across the ongoing debates on new accounting processes such as Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (s.a.) or the building of the knowledge base on alternative collaboration modalities such as triangular cooperation (OECD, s.a.). In a context in which DAC donors are redirecting their engagement, and increasingly influential Southern providers are avoiding Northern-dominated spaces (Gray & Gills, 2016), both state *and* non-state representatives hailing from many developing countries remain structurally inferior to their Northern counterparts.

Future research should examine how and to what extent non-state actors (are able to) challenge these patterns, and how intersecting hierarchies condition transnationalisation processes. Rather than assuming that multi-stakeholder rhetoric reflects partnership realities, we encourage a more empirically grounded, in-depth engagement with transnational phenomena in (and beyond) global development governance.

19 This was repeatedly highlighted during interviews with civil society representatives.

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Sámi-EU relations as an example of transnational cooperation for sustainable development?

Jacqueline Götze

Abstract

Neoliberal institutionalism frames international institutions as being able to "obviate the need for national power" (Barkin, 2003, p. 334). As the concept of transnational cooperation is informed by the school of neoliberal institutionalism, the question arises as to how relevant power relations are in settings of transnational cooperation, and in what way power can actually be obviated in these settings? Transnational cooperation formats are often seen as an ideal space for diverse actors to cooperate with each other, but like other political spaces, they are not free of questions of power – instead they are very much shaped by power relations. For the case of Sámi-EU relations as a para-diplomatic and post-colonial relationship, it is decisive to understand the dimension of power in order to comprehend this relationship and in what way power relations are challenged and changed in these transnational cooperative settings.

Introduction

The Sámi people – the only officially accepted Indigenous people in the European Union (EU) – are like many other Indigenous peoples a transnational people due to the borders of today's nation-states: Sápmi, the traditional land of the Sámi people, stretches across the European Arctic, the northern parts of today's Norway, Sweden and Finland, as well as the Kola Peninsula in Russia. On a regional level, the Arctic displays a long tradition of different stake-, rights- and knowledge-holders cooperating with each other transnationally, for instance in the field of knowledge cooperation, as many of the governance challenges are framed as transboundary and multi-issue. Moreover, the region also reflects the systemic inclusion of Indigenous peoples, most prominently through the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples' Organisations (IPOs) in the Arctic Council and the support of their contributions in the varying working groups of the intergovernmental forum. Thus, the Arctic region is often presented as a success story when it comes to international and transnational cooperation following an inclusive approach.

Against the backdrop of transnational cooperation, the role of non-state actors in global policy-making is highlighted. This divide between state and non-state actors is, however, not useful for understanding the case of Sámi-EU relations, as both actor groups fall outside this grid. The EU, on the one hand, is a political and economic union of member states and consists of supranational as well as intergovernmental institutions. The legal status of Sámi organisations, on the other hand, is in compliances with criteria provided for non-governmental organisations, which belong to the sphere of civil society. However, some Sámi organisations "take on governance functions" (Blaser, Feit, & McRae, 2004, p. 15), and some are elected decision-making bodies (Cambou & Koivurova, 2021, p. 327), such as the Sámi Parliaments in Sweden, Norway and Finland. Thus, both actor groups challenge certain understandings of "actorness" in studies on international relations by presenting new constellations of actors and governance structures.

Power in transnational cooperation

While looking at Sámi-EU relations, the following questions arise: "How powerful is transnational cooperation – in what way can transnational cooperation change power relations?" "Are actors able to obviate power issues through transnational cooperation?" By focussing on the (para)diplomatic relations between Sámi organisations and the EU, new insights can be gained into the nexus of transnational cooperation and power. By classifying Sámi organisations and EU institutions as

operating in the field of transnational cooperation, Sámi-EU relations are framed as an example of a governance structure of transnational cooperation. This is because different levels of government, state- and non-state actors as well as different policy areas are represented in the relationship, and ultimately built the relationship. With this transnational cooperation, the actors aim to support politics and policies that contribute towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Climate Agreement, mostly in the fields of Arctic climate issues and Indigenous peoples' rights, and by that, challenge existing hindrances in international relations. Sámi-EU relations are not officially formalised but contain ad hoc as well as more structured elements.

Different types and understandings of power shape (European) Arctic governance, and the politics concerning this issue need to reflect this reality as analysing transnational cooperation settings. Thus, in order to capture the transnational cooperation between Sámi organisations and the EU while also deconstructing their power relations, different theoretical frameworks from political philosophy should be used. Arendt's concept of power, for instance, provides an angle by framing political institutions as the manifestation and materialisation of power (Arendt, 1970, p. 41). Communicative structures therefore are needed for the actualisation of power. At the same time, power is expressed in the (transnational) cooperation itself (Arendt, 1958, p. 200). For Foucault, practices are the "point of entry for the analysis of how power functions" (Tennberg, 2010, p. 267). Together with Arendt's perspective on power and in the context of Sámi-EU relations, these practices are performed in cooperation formats. This is why these formats are the key object of analysis as arenas of power performance in relation to the respective other actor group.

Complementing the lens of transnational cooperation with the category of power shall lead to conceptual and empirical contributions in the field of transnational cooperation. The power of the EU as well as of Sámi organisations do not fit ideal-typically into the system of traditional international relations. The EU acts as a normative, market and regulatory power on an Arctic regional level, but the Union is still very much a "newcomer". On an EU and global level, however, the EU and its policies are very powerful in influencing life in Sápmi. In contrast, Sámi organisations are established actors at the regional level. Similar to other IPOs, they operate at the "threshold between the categories of state and non-state, official and unofficial diplomacy" (McConnell, 2017, p. 139). This characteristic further determines issues in institutional funding and capacities. The actor development of Sámi political actors and their claiming of the international arena (Beach et al., 2009) can be linked to global dynamics in the field of Indigenous internationalism (Wilson, 2020).

Conclusion

A qualitative data analysis indicates a complex, multilevel interplay between EU and Sámi actors, which is shaping their relationship through a very topic-dependent cooperation. For instance, under the framework of the European Green Deal, which created a new dynamic in Sámi-EU relations, fields within environmental policy, such as forestry and water, showcase very positive examples of a transnational cooperation that aims at obviating power issues through the inclusion of Sámi representatives alongside member states in consultations. In contrast, in the fields of mining for critical raw materials and the promotion of renewables, EU policies and legislations are described more as an additional burden than a lever or mediator between the Sámi and the national level.

Transnational cooperation formats are framed as arenas for exchanges and are often used as "door-openers" that facilitate more in-depth discussions, which have led in some cases to concrete policy outputs that more clearly reflect the rights of the Sámi. Thus, transnational cooperation can provide support to Sámi-EU relations, leading to Sámi representatives contributing towards policy-making, which reduces power imbalances. These developments in the field of transnational cooperation resonate with the objective of the 2030 Agenda to including as many perspectives in policy-making as possible to achieve more inclusive approaches, thereby levering overall achievements in sustainable development.

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When government and civil society organisations join forces in transnational advocacy: lessons from the Strategic Partnership Programme

Lena Gutheil

Abstract

Advocacy is a strategy to fight the root causes of poverty and exclusion, including activities to influence policies, awareness-raising, legal action and networking (van Wessel, Hilhorst, Schulpen, & Biekart, 2020, p. 730). While some of the advocacy activities might only take place at the domestic level targeting national actors, many domestic issues are framed by civil society organisations (CSOs) as part of transnational campaigns. As development challenges are not confined to national borders, CSO networks can contribute to policy processes at different policy levels through transnational advocacy. The contribution engages with an advocacy programme that sought cooperation between government and civil society actors, challenging not only the state–civil society divide, but also the power-laden relationship between donors and implementing partners. Although this approach could not tackle structural imbalances in the aid system, the programme still showed that complementary action between government and civil society actors can contribute to stronger transnational advocacy.

The Strategic Partnerships for Lobby and Advocacy

In 2014 the Dutch Minister for Foreign Trade and Development, Lilianne Ploumen, introduced a new policy framework for supporting CSOs called “Dialogue and Dissent”. Running from 2016-2020 the policy framework provided funding to foster the lobbying and advocacy capacities of CSOs in four different programmes totalling EUR 1.2 billion (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2017). Making advocacy the sole focus of such a large funding scheme is rather unique and can be attributed to the minister’s personal preferences as well as the fact that the Ministry wanted to strategically use the decreased aid budget to occupy a niche (van Wessel et al., 2020, p. 730). With close to EUR 1 billion, the largest funding instrument in the “Dialogue and Dissent” framework is the Strategic Partnerships for Lobby and Advocacy Programme (hereafter: SP programme). The aim of the SP programme was to support the lobbying and advocacy capacities of CSOs in different sectors in low- and lower-middle-income countries. Advocacy themes or agendas were to align with the broad Dutch development policy agenda, but not specified further. Organisations dealt with a broad range of topics ranging from campaigning for fairer taxation over influencing land and seed policies to advocating for women’s and minorities’ rights.

Transnational advocacy not only relies on CSOs but can include other actors, such as academics, the media, technical experts, government institutions and international organisations that gather around a certain thematic issue based on shared norms and values (Keck & Sikkink, 2014, p. 9). Oxfam’s campaign on the status of the Netherlands as a tax haven attracted worldwide support from citizens, for instance (Oxfam Novib, s.a.). Transnational advocacy coalitions use the transnational dimension as a strategic device, which sets these coalitions apart from CSOs that engage in transnational activities but are otherwise embedded in bilateral development cooperation. At the core of transnational advocacy is the strategic mobilisation of information “to help create new issues and categories and to persuade, pressure, and gain leverage over much more powerful organizations and governments” (Keck & Sikkink, 2014, p. 2). Thus, transnational advocacy networks form epistemic communities that include a large variety of actors and transcend national boundaries.

In the SP programme, the selection of 25 CSO consortia was organised through a tendering process. Consortium lead organisations (based in the Netherlands, except for one) were then responsible for managing the implementation and funding of activities with partner organisations in low- and lower-middle-income countries. The SP programme relies on a conceptualisation of CSOs as "political actors in their own right" that can contribute to social transformation by challenging structural inequalities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2017, p. iii). Apart from its focus on lobbying and advocacy, the SP programme was special in that it aimed at bridging the state–civil society divide by proposing strategic partnerships between CSO consortia and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To this end, partnership agreements were signed, and each consortium was matched with a thematic department of the Ministry in order to "work in partnership with shared responsibilities" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2017, p. 2), characterised by "equality and reciprocity" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, 2015, p. 6).

By aligning the efforts of the Ministry, the Dutch embassies in partner countries and the CSOs, better advocacy results were expected. This assumption clearly runs counter to the mainstream development literature, which portrays CSO–donor relationships as unequal and emphasises that donors should step back and respect the autonomy of CSOs. The dependency of CSOs on donor funding has been controversially discussed and found to lead to mission drift and even estrangement from constituents in many cases. In a similar manner, the collaboration of CSOs with governments has often been discussed critically in terms of co-optation (Banks, Hulme, & Edwards, 2015). Putting the strategic partnership between the Ministry and CSOs at the centre of a large funding scheme is thus rather unusual and provides a number of interesting lessons learnt.

Interactions between the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and lead partner CSOs in the SP programme: benefits and trade-offs

The lead Dutch CSOs in the SP programme were quite vocal about the benefits of entering into a strategic partnership with the Ministry. Collaboration with the Ministry could facilitate contacts and open doors for CSOs to gain access to political actors. Advantages were also perceived in terms of collaborating with Dutch embassies in partner countries, as embassies can put pressure on local governments to protect activists and civic spaces (van Wessel et al., 2020, p. 734). CSOs found departments and embassies to be more accessible than beforehand, and that improved contacts at the level of the government could be leveraged for lobbying (Gutheil, 2020, p. 135). The Ministry's department liaison persons were also positive about the collaboration, stressing the importance of accessing information from the grassroots and becoming aware of local incidents that might have otherwise slipped their attention. They also stressed that they could potentially be useful to CSOs by taking up their issues to international fora. Overall, they perceived that CSOs benefit from the collaboration, but they did not necessarily see CSOs as "potentially strategically useful actors" (van Wessel et al., 2020, p. 735). In a similar vein, CSO staff described that departments were not always proactive in seeking strategic collaboration, but instead waited for CSOs to come forward (Gutheil, 2020, p. 135).

Although there was a clear benefit of complementary roles, the agendas of government and CSOs were not necessarily always aligned. Some embassies and government departments feared that their association with certain positions of CSOs could harm their relationships with other governmental actors. At the same time, some CSOs in partner countries were concerned about losing legitimacy if they were perceived as acting jointly with a foreign government and receiving large shares of funding from them (Gutheil & Koch, 2022, p. 9). The programme certainly left enough space for CSOs to work on their own agendas, and CSOs were allowed to work on "dissent", which means that the risk for co-optation was low. However, in order to harness the benefits of the partnerships, there was an incentive to work in alignment. Although there were organisations that campaigned against the Ministry's agenda within the programme, the "dissent" option was generally made much less use of (van Wessel et al., 2020, p. 740).

Additional challenges to the mutuality of partnerships result from the double role of the Ministry as partner and donor. Not all department liaison persons were equally committed to the partner role and, despite the efforts towards collaboration, the reporting and money flow was still one-way (Gutheil & Koch, 2022, p. 10). CSOs were still entirely responsible and accountable for the results of programmes. The policy proposed a certain degree of freedom with regard to project management, but requirements in terms of accountability and liability remained in place (Gutheil & Koch, 2022, p. 12).

Apart from the power imbalances between the Ministry and the consortium lead organisations, CSOs in partner countries were not necessarily involved to the same extent in the partnership. Research on two programmes in Uganda and Vietnam showed that the national counterpart of the international organisation was invited to embassy meetings in the partner country. However, other national – and specifically sub-national – partners were not even aware of the existence of a strategic partnership. Organisations in the Netherlands acted as gatekeepers for transnational advocacy, deciding which issues to put forward. At the same time, knowledge-exchange events at the domestic, regional and international levels were much appreciated by domestic CSOs, giving them a sense of empowerment by feeling that they were part of “something bigger” (Gutheil, 2021).

Conclusion

The bold move of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs to engage with its own lobby provides an interesting example of how transnational advocacy can go beyond the participation of civil society actors. The above-stated benefits of complementary action between the Ministry and the CSOs refute some of the academic literature that cautions CSOs against collaborating with governments and donors because of the risk of co-optation. The advocacy activities of CSOs at the lead-partner level clearly benefitted from the collaboration with the Ministry in many instances. At the same time, space for dissent was a prerequisite to safeguard the autonomy of CSOs. The programme did allow for collaboration, but it did not impose it.

Not all CSO campaigns require a transnational approach, and not all of them benefit from the visible support of a foreign government. In cases of sensitive issues, such as human rights advocacy in authoritarian regimes, CSOs must carefully act towards maintaining their legitimacy. If foreign governments publicly appear as donors in such interventions, this can put domestic organisations and activists at risk, and also be detrimental to government relations. The SP programme also shows that transnational advocacy networks are not characterised by equal power relations. The access to funding, decision-makers and agenda-setting is not equally distributed among actors. CSOs in partner countries did not benefit to the same extent as lead partner organisations from the involvement of the Ministry.

Transnational cooperation in the form of transnational advocacy overall yielded mutual benefits for CSOs and the Ministry through enhanced visibility, better access to decision-makers and improved knowledge exchange. At the same time, it did not challenge the greater funding environment in which the CSOs operated. This innovative programme should not conceal the fact that overall funding for CSOs in the Netherlands has declined dramatically in recent years, and that a lack of core funding and moves towards more policy complementarity have increased competition and decreased overall autonomy for CSOs (Schulpen, van Kempen, & Elbers, 2018).

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The role of transnational democracy activists during Togo's constitutional reform episode, 2017-2019

Daniel Nowack

Abstract

Amidst resurgent autocratisation around the world, digitalisation makes it easier than ever before for civil society activists and opposition politicians to connect with potential allies in other countries. Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, domestic grassroots social movements seem to be increasingly connecting and forming transnational networks and platforms. Against this observation it becomes relevant to study whether transnational alliances can and will play a greater role in fostering democratisation and countering autocratisation. This paper first provides background on the phenomenon of increased transnational networking in sub-Saharan Africa. It then proceeds to present a brief case vignette of the role transnational activist connections played during Togo's constitutional reform episode 2017-2019. Findings show that activists purposefully sought transnational allies, but that for the specific case at hand, the links to transnational networks and platforms were still too nascent. The Togolese regime hence was able to easily obstruct transnational democracy activists from having greater influence.

Introduction

There has been a new impetus regarding the diffusion and role of social movements and civic protests in sub-Saharan Africa in the last decade (Sadovskaya, Fakhrutdinova, & Kochanova, 2021). Particularly with regard to guarding democratic achievements and forestalling democratic backsliding, observers see civil society as a crucial actor. Political science research, for instance, has documented the important role that civil society played during the struggles over the retraction and circumvention of presidential term limits. Although civil society actors show a varied and inconclusive pattern of success and failure in guarding democratic institutions (Nowack, 2021; Rakner, 2021), the attention of political science researchers is merited, not only for the increase in civil society activity alone, but also for the transnational form it now takes in parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

What this activism renders *transnational* is not merely a transnational form of organisation. Rather, in addition to this form of organisation, such activism engages in "transnational contention", defined by Tarrow as "conflicts that link transnational activists to one another, to states, and to international institutions" (2005, p. 25). This implies that *transnational* activism – in contrast to *domestic* activism – operates in an arena exceeding national borders (Bob, 2019). It targets multiple national and/or other transnational actors as either allies or opponents, and it employs its strategies *transnationally*. The latter means that strategies are diffused across borders and employed in multiple national arenas, as well as potentially in international arenas such as international fora. The direct and important implication of transnational contention, as conceptualised in this way, is that it offers the opportunity for what Tarrow calls "scale-shift" (2005, p. 121). Activism, or contention, may originate locally but then diffuses nationally and eventually internationally, maybe even globally, in the process of which its focal targets, strategies and claims may also shift and change, widen or narrow. However, the direction of scale-shift is not prescribed and may also run "downward" from more global contexts to local ones.

The new transnational activism in sub-Saharan Africa – as seen in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), to name just a few – display recurring characteristics. They are often spearheaded by a social movement of the urban youth – such as Y'en a Marre (Senegal), Balai Citoyen (Burkina Faso) and Lucha (DRC) – and seem weakly connected to already "established" actors of civil society, namely conventional non-governmental

organisations (NGOs) (Kasanda, 2018; Wienkoop, 2022). Similarly, although still a blind spot in the research literature, it can be hypothesised that these social movements have less access to other actors of the international and transnational political "establishment" such as regional and international organisations, when compared to formal NGOs and transnational advocacy groups, which often already have a place in respective regional and international fora. Furthermore, these "newer" movements present themselves as young and urban, and they employ urban youth culture, for example, art and (rap) music as well as digital technology for mobilisation and contestation. This sets them somewhat apart from more conventional "establishment NGOs". Accordingly, this rise of social movement and protest activism in sub-Saharan Africa is connected to the emergence of new forms of formal transnational civil society mobilisation (Msoka, 2017).

In sub-Saharan Africa, a number of social movement organisations (SMOs) emerged as new transnational umbrella organisations, or platforms, in recent years with the expressed goal of uniting and bringing together civil society organisations (CSOs) from different countries, particularly the less conventionally established and formalised social movements. Examples of these new transnational SMOs across sub-Saharan Africa are Africans Rising, Afrikki and Tournons La Page.

This brief case vignette sheds initial light on the role of such transnational civic activism during a reform episode in Togo (2017-2019), a competitive authoritarian, or semi-authoritarian, regime. The case presented raises critical questions as to whether transnational activism can fulfil the promise of being a critical ally for domestic social movements and civil society actors protesting for democracy.

Case vignette: Togo's constitutional reform episode

Since its forestalled democratic transition in the 1990s, Togo is an electoral autocracy, and as such is a representative case for many political regimes worldwide (Boese et al., 2022). By 2022, the family of the current president, Faure Gnassingbé, had ruled Togo for more than half a century. As an electoral autocracy, Togo holds both local as well as national elections, but they are often marred by irregularities. Political party opposition as well as extra-parliamentarian civil society opposition does exist and is tolerated to an extent, but it is also restricted and suppressed. Cycles of protests, repression and political instability are a recurring pattern. Such a cycle broke out yet again in the summer of 2017, when the charismatic leader of an outsider opposition party succeeded in mobilising large protests that originated in the country's north, but soon swept through all major cities (Heilbrunn, 2019). Carried by these protests, a front comprised of a large political party and civil society opposition formed and demanded major constitutional reforms, particularly the reintroduction of a presidential term limit, which would have barred Gnassingbé from running for president another time. Under the pressure of protests and through the mediation of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Gnassingbé ceded and agreed to a roadmap, leading to a major constitutional reform in 2019.

In the wake of this constitutional reform episode, which started with the protests in 2017 and ended with the passing of the constitutional reform package by parliament in spring of 2019, Togo reintroduced a two-term limit for presidents. However, the public debate throughout was heated and characterised by protests from civil society and political parties. The critical question was whether the two-term limit would take effect retroactively or not. When laws are enacted retroactively, their stipulations take effect starting from a date in the past rather than from the present date. If it had taken effect retroactively, President Gnassingbé would have been barred from running for office another time. However, as a major opposition front of political parties boycotted the legislative elections of 2018 – and, hence, did not make it into parliament – the ruling party easily instituted a minimal constitutional reform, in which the newly reintroduced term limit would not take effect retroactively. As a consequence, the number of presidential terms already served by Gnassingbé under the newly amended constitution was reset to zero. This allowed him to compete again in the presidential elections in 2020, which he eventually won.

An interesting question pertains to the interactions between the domestic political parties and civil society on the one hand, and transnational actors on the other. To which degree did domestic actors of civil society and political party opposition receive support from transnational African civil society actors such as Africans Rising, Afrikki and/or Tournons La Page? Prominent theoretical frameworks from the political science literature on human rights and social movements suggest that domestic civil society actors seek out the support of civil society in foreign countries. According to Keck and Sikkink (1998), domestic civil society actors under distress or engaged in political struggles at home hope for a "boomerang effect", by which their civil society allies in other countries exert pressure on their own governments, which in turn exert pressure on the original civil society's government. Tsutsui and Smith (2019), in line with Bob (2019), expand upon this idea and suggest that the boomerang effect is actually a "sandwich effect". According to this, civil society actors reach out to both transnational civil society and transnational intergovernmental actors, such as international and regional organisations, in order to garner bottom-up as well as top-down support.

In Togo's case, the evidence for such an effect is rather mixed. According to an interviewee from a Togolese umbrella organisation bringing together a number of different "conventional" CSOs but also urban social movements, "this [i.e. exchange and cooperation with transnational West African CSOs] was something that we lacked. We had at times discussions with them, but [at that time] we did not put in place new coherent, funded, executable strategies."[20]

Instead, it was easy for the regime to obstruct such exchanges. For instance, a delegate party of Africans Rising travelled to Togo in October 2017 but were promptly arrested and interrogated by police forces before being forced to leave the country (Amnesty International, 2022). Likewise, the aforementioned umbrella organisation found it difficult to connect to other transnational African organisations and receive support ad hoc:

> We also have some contact to Tournons La Page. […]. We spoke about the struggle [over the constitutional reform in Togo], but they ask to be a member of their network before being able to help us, to support us in the struggle. So, there are rules. We are meanwhile now [i.e. November 2019] members of Tournons La Page.[21]

However, in contrast, interviewees of Togolese urban social movements stressed the dense and regular connections and exchanges they have with movements of other African countries through transnational arbiter organisations. Figure 2, for instance, shows the network of "frequent exchanges" between CSOs and political parties in Togo as well as transnational civil society. The graph illustrates clearly that, in Togo, one particular urban social movement was – through the transnational movement platform Afrikki – connected to a number of other prominent and large social movements in other African countries, such as Y'en A Marre and Balai Citoyen. According to the interviewees of this Togolese urban social movement, they have frequent and inclusive exchanges with these other organisations, while the Togolese urban social movement retains autonomy on final decisions:

> We are permanently in discussion with them [i.e. members of Afrikki]. It is actually a form of solidarity; we are like buddies [original: *nous somme comme des camarades*]. Today, when there is a problem in Togo, it is that all these organisations mobilise to support what we are doing in Togo, and when there are problems in Burkina Faso, when the Balai Citoyen acts, it is all of us who must be acting, the same movement […]. We pass on to them the message: "Yes, we want to do for example such and such demonstration at such and such time here, so what do you think? The objective is such and such." They also give us their advice, "Okay, if you do this, that's fine." Everyone gives their opinion, but the final decision is ours […]. So, there is still a sharing of experience, a solidarity at all levels. We support each other as much as we can, so that there can be progress.[22]

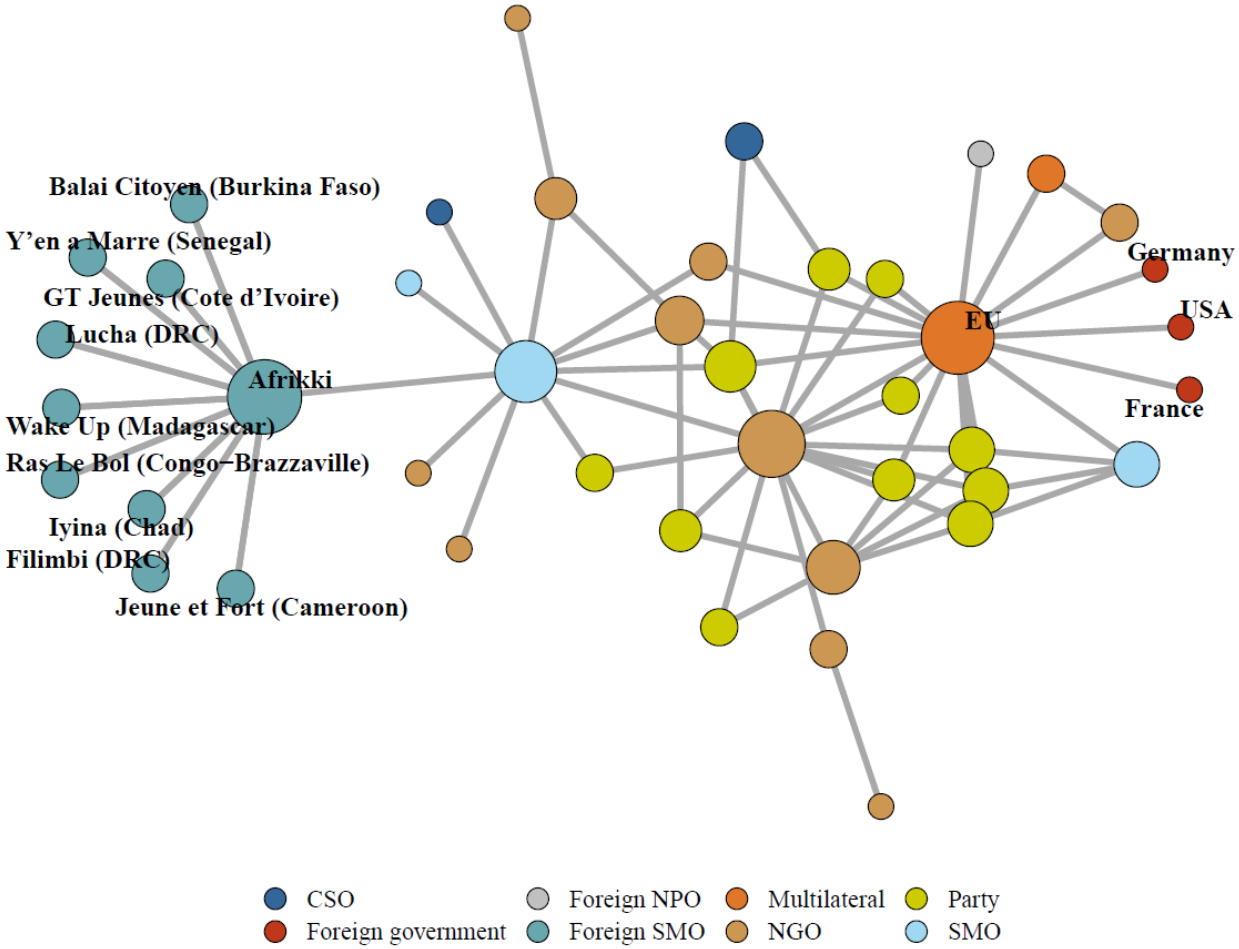
20 Personal interview Lomé, Togo, 2 November 2019.

21 Personal interview Lomé, Togo, 2 November 2019.

22 Personal interview Lomé, Togo, 15 November 2019.

At the same time, however, the network graph in Figure 2 draws stark attention to the fact that only this particular urban social movement acted as a hub within the network of CSOs and political parties; at the time of the constitutional reform episode, it alone connected the domestic Togolese network to other foreign African movements. This indicates a form of network fragility, because it is easy for an authoritarian power to obstruct the work of a civil society opposition front in which a few central actors form hubs and connect otherwise isolated network components. Accordingly, members of the aforementioned urban social movement had to endure repression by government forces, including arrests and jail time.

Figure 2: Network graph of Togolese and transnational actors



Note: Ties indicate where interviewees of the respective organisations unilaterally stated: "We did not jointly coordinate any actions, but we often exchanged – for example via meetings, information by phone, e-mail, WhatsApp and so on." For the Afrikki node, only the tie to its Togolese SMO counterpart is based on interview data; the remaining ties are based on web data on Afrikki member organisations taken from the website of Afrikki (s.a.).

Source: Author

The network graph in Figure 2 also highlights the role of another transnational actor, namely the European Union (EU), as represented by the office of the EU delegation in Togo. Like some of the other actors represented in the graph with many ties, the EU delegation acted as a central actor in the frequent exchanges within the civil society network. As the EU delegation was in close contact with Togo's other major donors (i.e. the remaining four of the Grand 5 (G5): France, the United States, the United Nations/ UN Development Programme and Germany), the delegation thus served as a bridge within the network. It connected the Togolese civil society and political party opposition either directly or indirectly to the donor component of the larger network. However,

importantly, an interviewee of a donor organisation suggested that donors' foreign policy interests obstructed stronger *joint* action by all donors.[23]

Conclusion

In conclusion, this brief case vignette presents a sandwich effect, as surmised by Tsutsui and Smith (2019), but one that only went so far for Togo's civil society. During the reform episode of 2017 to 2019, the civil society opposition reached out to both transnational non-governmental civil society actors such as other African social movements, as well as to intergovernmental organisations such as the EU. However, it would be too bold to conclude that this resulted in bottom-up and top-down pressure on the Togolese government. With regard to bottom-up pressure, the Togolese regime easily obstructed greater involvement by transnational civil society, as the arrests of Africans Rising representatives show.

At the same time, digitalisation provided the opportunity for Togolese civil society, particularly urban social movements, to exchange and coordinate to some extent with other African social movements. With regard to top-down pressure, the case vignette suggests that foreign policy interests and risks stood in the way of a stronger response to the authoritarian repression of domestic civil society and party opposition. In sum, although this case illustrates the growing importance of transnational actors for political change, it also indicates how easy it is for governments in (competitive) authoritarian settings to obstruct civil society's efforts to connect with and mobilise transnational partners.

23 Personal interview Lomé, Togo, 12 November 2019.

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Part 2: The role of knowledge cooperation

Coping with power asymmetries in transnational mutual learning and dialogue formats

Samantha Ruppel & Anna Schwachula

Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of acknowledging power asymmetries in transnational (knowledge) cooperation and exchange. The authors explore different forms of power and the challenges of tackling power imbalances while working in cooperation between diverse actors. They argue that new and more reflective approaches to transnational (knowledge) cooperation are necessary. The authors then discuss how power inequalities are addressed in the Managing Global Governance (MGG) Academy and in the Shaping Futures Academy,[24] organised by the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS). Both formats are mutual learning and dialogue programmes for early to mid-career professionals from different partner countries around the globe.

Introduction

While living and acting in a world full of interdependencies and working in transnational cooperation beyond national boundaries towards a common global good, it becomes important to consider the diversity of actors and power asymmetries in transnational cooperation. One important aspect of transnational cooperation is knowledge cooperation and exchange. Knowledge and exchange on different insights is of continuing importance in the context of the multiple ongoing global crises and the related challenges to global governance. This exchange can take place via mutual learning and dialogue formats as well as research endeavours that not only involve actors of different societal sectors from different countries of the Global Souths,[25] but also play a key role in finding joint answers to global challenges. New and more reflective approaches to North-South cooperation are necessary to overcome knowledge inequalities without reinforcing pre-existing knowledge hierarchies.

IDOS is working with formats that are located within the wider field of transnational knowledge cooperation and exchange. Power inequalities in transnational cooperation in general – and in transnational knowledge cooperation in particular – reflect our own realisations and awareness. Therefore, we consider ways to mitigate and reduce traditional power asymmetries in two transnational learning and dialogue programmes of IDOS: the MGG Academy and the Shaping Futures Academy.

24 In 2023, the BMZ African-German Leadership Academy was renamed to Shaping Futures: African-European Network on Development and Sustainability Academy, short form: Shaping Futures Academy.

25 In this paper, terms such as “Global Norths” and “Global Souths” are used repeatedly. The use is based on the assumption that the respective words are constructs, which should not be seen in a one-dimensional way, but rather have a multitude of variations, emphasised by the use of the plural form. In line with Hall’s definition of the “West” (1992), Global North(s) are here conceptualised as a historical and not a geographic construct. The term refers to a certain type of society, certain patterns of action and liberal models that have historically grown into a concept. Likewise, it is assumed that the concept of the Global South(s) has grown historically and has emerged in the sense of the debate about “othering” (Said, 1978) as a means of demarcation. Both terms are not accurate, they continue to encompass many variations and are not to be understood as rigid concepts (Haug, Braveboy-Wagner, & Maihold, 2021).

Structural power in cooperation

Whenever different actors work together, tensions may occur based on unbalanced power relations between them. Power in the interactions in transnational cooperation – and especially mutual learning and dialogue formats between actors from the Global Norths and the Global Souths – manifests itself in various areas, ranging from power over resources, power over the agenda of cooperation and the power to shape formats, among others. In Foucault's sense, power does not necessarily mean the ability to force someone to do something. Rather, power can be found in individual *voluntary* decisions in a field that is structured in a certain way, or where a discourse only offers certain opportunities for constructing reality (Foucault, 1982). Important in this understanding of power is that it encompasses the actors' capacity to structure their own and others' scopes of action and can also enable, guide or prevent actions, for example by drawing on different resources (Wagenaar, 2022; Ziai, 2009). Power can thus be understood as either repressive or also enabling and productive (Foucault, 1980). To a large extent, power relies on social attribution, based on, for example, resources, which also include social and cultural capital (Foucault, 1980, 1982). Hence, power manifests itself in the ***relations*** between actors as well as in their individual ***actions***. At the same time, power relations are also inscribed in and reproduced by ***structures***, ***norms*** and ***practices*** (Foucault, 1980; Keller, 2013; Ziai, 2009).

In South-North mutual learning and dialogue formats, layers of power are manifold: from power over (discussed) knowledge to power over finance and decisions – just to name a few. Based on the theoretical underpinnings outlined above, it seems essential to not only look at the micro-level of implementing transnational learning formats, but to also consider power manifestations in the wider structural context that enables or restricts certain actors in their agency. A key structural limitation is the global science system in a post-colonial world, which pre-orders the conditions of cooperation in favour of the Global Norths. On the global scale, inequalities between countries of the Global Souths and Norths become evident in the diverging technological capacities; the continued dominance of often previously colonising Northern societies in science, culture and in global policy; as well as in a globalised economy based on inequality, and thus reinforcing it. Knowledge and perspectives from the Global Souths are structurally disadvantaged, and thus lack recognition and appreciation globally; they are underrepresented in the science system as well as in global governance (de Sousa Santos, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2011; Teo, 2010).

At least on paper, partnerships on an equal footing have turned into the norm in different types of transnational cooperation, including development cooperation, cooperation between civil society organisations on peacebuilding and research cooperation. Yet, scholars argue that in practice, cooperation continues to be marked by inherent power asymmetries, with Northern partners being in historically rooted, dominant positions (Cornwall & Eade, 2010; Ruppel, 2021; Schwachula, 2019). Cooperation thus bears the risks of reproducing neo-colonial power imbalances if partners lack reflexivity or the will to counteract asymmetrical relations. Actors who engage in mutual learning and dialogue formats as part of transnational cooperation need to find ways of how to address existing imbalances in their formats. Neither the Shaping Futures Academy nor the MGG Academy are an exception: Both strive for equality in cooperation, but they also recognise the challenge to live up to the normative objective, rather than merely naming cooperation as being "on eye-level".

Dealing with power inequalities in the Shaping Futures Academy and the MGG Academy

We begin with the general setup of the academies and turn to examples from the MGG Academy and the Shaping Futures Academy on how power inequalities are addressed, as we acknowledge the existing power asymmetries in our training and dialog formats. The Shaping Futures Academy and the MGG Academy are formats for mutual learning and dialogue, targeted at early to mid-career professionals from selected partner countries and Germany. Both academies are

conceptualised as spaces for joint (and peer) learning and discussions on topics such as sustainability, governance and leadership. Furthermore, they allow for the collaborative creation of new knowledge, foster mutual understanding and aim to establish mutual trust as a basis for further cooperation (Morare & Grimm, 2021). Both formats are based on the understanding that contributing to the global common good on a shared planet needs to be a joint endeavour (Fues, 2018, pp. 31-32) – with Northern countries having a particular historical responsibility to change their unsustainable pathways. We thus consider developing expertise for societal change as a common starting point. This explicitly includes perspectives from the Global Souths, which currently still lack visibility and acknowledgement in global science and policy for sustainable development. The inclusion and mixture of perspectives is very important, as no country has all the answers or resources to tackle the diverse challenges with regard to sustainability (Reiber & Reiners, 2019). Given this starting point, we see the use of dialogical approaches and exchange – instead of one-way capacity development approaches – as helpful. Learning from and with each other about differences and similarities while jointly co-developing new insights, it is important to put the pre-existing expertise of all participants at the centre and in our programmes in order to focus on peer exchange between the participants. In other words, expertise of the Souths is acknowledged, appreciated and circulated – hopefully contributing towards diminishing the Northern bias in the global knowledge system in the long run.

As soon as there is a focus on dealing with complex and potentially contested challenges, such as sustainability, dialogical approaches and exchange between a plurality of actors with diverse backgrounds become important. Therefore, it is essential to include actors from diverse societal groups who contribute various perspectives and knowledge relevant to sustainability in discussions and decision-making processes. In view of power-sensitive learning, we strive to create inclusive, respectful interfaces that actively invite a variety of perspectives and plurality of viewpoints. To encourage and support a plurality of perspectives, we include different participatory and bottom-up methods so that multiple voiced can be heard. The goal is to foster an equitable and fair exchange and learning, while acknowledging the diversity of partners and perspectives.

Additionally, work towards the global common good requires global participation, not only in discussions but in agenda setting. For example, an important part of the Shaping Futures Academy is its advisory board, which provides reflection and gives recommendations, creating opportunities for co-designing the Academy. This structured exchange contains a mechanism to keep the programme relevant to African partner organisations and political processes – and offers learnings for the German side, both for IDOS and its political stakeholder: the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). In the MGG Programme, for its part, joint reflections with partners from the network and alumni have taken place to jointly scrutinise issues of diversity and inequality within the format. As a result, the curriculums dedicate specific sessions to discuss power within the programmes.

Conclusion

Overall, an essential and crosscutting pre-requisite of our work is reflexivity. Acknowledging the existing open and underlying inequalities in global knowledge production and cooperation as a starting point fosters a joint reflection on roles, positions and privileges. It is essential for working on knowledge production, with its underlying norms and values, not least when jointly striving for the global common good. Reflexivity and openness may be uncomfortable, but worthwhile, as change can only happen if actors – particularly those in position of power – are willing to be uncomfortable, open up to shifts of power and keep on questioning themselves (Schwachula & Esteves, 2020).

As a Northern partner within our networks, we are aware of the inherent power imbalances of the formats as well as being privileged in the postcolonial structures of our current global knowledge system. Although we operate in this unequal system, MGG and the Shaping Futures Academy

strive to be transparent about power inequalities within the programmes – not least with regard to the availability of financial resources – and actively work to mitigate these inequalities. It is important that our programmes – through knowledge cooperation beyond the academies – also aim to impact global structures, including hierarchies in the global science and knowledge systems, and actively work against asymmetries in various, jointly selected contexts. Engaging and networking between actors from the Global Souths and the Global Norths consequently means sharing access to resources, including beyond finance, such as knowledge and visibility in the form of publications or editorials, and in that way contribute to their inclusion in the global scientific knowledge system, putting power-sensitive dialogue formats into place at the same time. We suggest that institutions based in the Global Norths that are working in transnational cooperation formats – not least so explicit learning setups such as the mentioned IDOS formats – actively foster awareness about inherently existing inequalities and develop strategies on how these inequalities can be mitigated, even with the knowledge that they will not be completely overcome by our programmes single-handedly.

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Who owns the outcomes of transnational science and technology cooperation? Reflections about German-Indonesian cooperation on the tsunami warning system

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Abstract

Transnational cooperation in the science and technology domain has been an integral part of global society. From the times when humans developed artefacts in the prehistoric age to colonialisation practices, the World Wars and beyond, and from managing global health issues to addressing regional and global natural disasters, science and technology are inherent parts of global change and exchanges. Cooperation in the science and technology domain requires its own forms and frameworks of exchange and circumstances. Entanglements are equally political and complex because they are outcomes of power asymmetries. This paper reflects on a case study on German-Indonesian transnational cooperation in the domain of science and technology, namely the German-Indonesian Tsunami Early Warning System Project (GITEWS).

Science and technology are practically inseparable from the notion of human life. They are also integral parts of the so-called common goods, both in their tangible and intangible forms. Science and technology are fundamental elements for humans as they respond and adapt to a dynamic and changing world.

The structures, cultures and institutions that constitute science and technology in their varied forms depend on context. They are often distinct in their characteristics and practical applications as well as their level of public acceptance. Cooperation in the science and technology domain requires its own forms and frameworks of exchange and circumstances. Entanglements are equally political and complex because they are outcomes of power asymmetries. Often, these asymmetries compromise the aim of science and technology to advance sustainable and just development. Therefore, transnational cooperation in the science and technology domain requires a broader conceptualisation of its context (scope, agencies and actor interactions) to allow foresight on how it enables pathways towards sustainability – in other words, how its transformative role unfolds (Hernandez, 2022).

Cooperation in the science and technology domain reproduces power asymmetries when it builds on unequal access to material and immaterial resources such as research funding, research infrastructures and human capital. This inequality can be deeply entrenched in the science and technology landscape, for example when compliance with scientific quality criteria depends on such resources. Power asymmetries are immensely difficult to break because they affect different dimensions of knowledge creation and transfer (Hernandez, 2021). For example, dominance structures can define which knowledge is considered “valid”. The life experiences and the resulting “body of learning” of those in the periphery might not be part of the equation, simply because they are considered outliers. Power asymmetries are also evident in the way scientific knowledge is created, when scientists from advanced economies conduct studies on issues that mostly affect citizens in the emerging economies or less-developed countries, and the results are disseminated through high-impact journals in English and “protected” intellectual property rights and patents. In many ways, these approaches limit the access to public knowledge, the inclusiveness of Indigenous societies and their ethnosciences, and at the same time reward private-sector investment and innovation. When scientists and investors in the more privileged countries label the outcomes of substantial exchanges between the advanced economies and the emerging economies to improve certain technologies as being “owned” by them, fairness becomes an issue. Few incentives are given to break or dissolves these asymmetries, which often challenge transboundary cooperation in the science and technology domain.

On the other hand, the transnationality of technologies in itself offers fluidity. Knowledge and ideas, people, artefacts and technologies circulate across borders. These transnational changes and exchanges constitute the co-creations of technologies as continuously "becoming" (Biehl & Locke, 2010). From a critical stance, the flow of knowledge and technologies is not necessarily unidirectional from the "North" to the "South". We also argue that the financing of research projects through donors does not equate sole ownership, when considering the non-monetary contributions of scientists and experts in the emerging or less advanced countries in creating the knowledge. To provide preliminary ideas for our arguments, in the following we reflect on a case study concerning German-Indonesian transnational cooperation in the domain of science and technology, namely GITEWS, which was designed to be the pillar and foundation of the Indonesian Tsunami Warning System.

The Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004 brought devastation to humans and livelihoods beyond the region. There were more than 200,000 lives lost during the tsunami – the highest loss of lives for German citizens alone in a single event since the Second World War. There was no early warning system in the Indian Ocean region that could have helped coastal populations, migrants and tourists escape the destructive waves. Shortly afterwards, the tsunami led to initiatives by different countries with the experience and capacities to experiment with advanced forecasting and warning system technologies, Germany among them.[26] A complex tsunami warning system technology was planned to reduce future tsunami risks using seismic sensors, pre-computed modelling and software, off-shore observation instruments, decision support systems, siren networks and evacuation infrastructure. The idea was to develop a "state-of-the-art" technology to address global challenges, with the interest of protecting communities at risk. The project was led by the Deutsches Geoforschungszentrum (GFZ – German Research Center for Geoscience, Helmholtz-Zentrum Potsdam), one of the world's leading institutions in earthquake sciences. Interestingly, although knowledgeable in seismology, Germany's science communities were not popularly known as experts in tsunami science, at least before 2004. Whereas in Indonesia, tsunamis occur on average every two years and are often lethal, Germany does not have a history of experiencing tsunamis, and therefore the attempt to find ways to accumulate knowledge and experiences in the domain is quite exceptional. On the other hand, geological sciences in Indonesia gradually emerged after its independence. The sciences in general were deployed within a framework and infrastructure that serve the economic interests of the nation-state. This was often focussed more towards the exploration of earth resources and minerals, as compared to investments and funding for seismology and tsunami sciences to reduce disaster risks. Moreover, the earth sciences in Germany and Indonesia tend to have less of a focus on social dimensions in their studies.

To bridge the geological challenges with existing knowledge and resources, the priority was to establish a "quick and dirty" system that could immediately prompt evacuation decisions by relying on available earthquake information using seismic sensors and pre-computed modelling, although this could result in inaccuracy. The design was to allow seismic information to be collected and analysed as soon as possible and to automatically advise whether the earthquake might trigger a tsunami wave. The alert would then be disseminated to the local government and communities exposed to risks using sirens, radio and other digital and analogue means. This "land-centric" warning system differed from warning system technologies used by the United States and Japan, for example. Both utilise offshore approaches and technologies to observe tsunamis in real-time using underwater cable systems or floating buoys, which require expensive deployment and maintenance costs.

The GITEWS project was set to deliver: The state-of-the-art technologies were to be handed over to the Government of Indonesia within four years (2005-2008), with a three-year extension. The project was facing pressures for several reasons. First, the funding was given immediately after a

26 Most of the empirical data related to GITEWS for this paper is summarised from the PhD research project: Irina Rafliana, *Traveling Waves of Knowledge and Technologies – the Indonesian Tsunami Warning System* (manuscript in preparation).

catastrophic event, pushing scientists to deliver not merely for the sake of science-for-science, or science to improve policy, but more importantly for humanity. This is fundamentally a non-traditional driver of science cooperation between Germany and Indonesia. Second, the project was sought by the highest officials – from the German Chancellor to the President of the Republic of Indonesia – and observed closely by national and international media. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono had explicitly instructed that the system should deliver a warning to the public within five minutes or less. This political directive also became the driver of the project's outputs. Lastly, the fact that Germany was a "new kid on the block" in the tsunami science community in 2004 added external pressures. It wanted to ensure that the GITEWS technology designs were developed and implemented successfully, as neither Japan nor the United States had seriously invested their "ocean observation"-based approaches in the region, at least before 2004. The "seismic-based" approach to the system was highly contested by global competitors in the field and it needed to prove that it was effective.

Addressing the above pressures, Indonesia was positioned as the "recipient" of the output of the GITEWS project. Most of the experts and institutes in Indonesia were not involved in the design phase, although several Indonesian scientists – mostly those educated in Japan – were involved in knowledge exchanges. There were structural limitations within the Indonesian research field that also hindered equal exchanges and co-production of knowledge. For example, for years after the 2004 tsunami, universities and research institutes in Indonesia did not have the supercomputer capacity to run the acquired tsunami pre-computed models, as required by GITEWS' design. As a result, the tsunami models – a critical component of the system – were mainly developed by German mathematicians and experts. Political statements from ministries and leaders in Indonesia clearly aimed at seizing ownership of the planned tsunami warning system. The role that Indonesia plays within the Indian Ocean region also provided leadership opportunities for other countries, mostly developing or less-developed countries affected by the 2004 event. However, it was challenging for Indonesian researchers to position themselves on an equal level with project partners, especially when scarce internal resources and funding had already been directed towards the response to – and rehabilitation of – the affected areas in Aceh and Nias, which took years to return to "normal". Post-disaster vulnerabilities, resources and power inequalities in science and technology development and investments were important factors to understand how the cooperation was structured. The narrative of "technology handover" as aid from Germany to Indonesia also in a way distorted views about the co-production of knowledge and technologies to reduce tsunami risks. The warning system was inaugurated in 2008, and the Government of Indonesia was to continue maintaining the system until it became fully function in 2011. At this point, ownership became entangled with changes in pressures on the researchers, engineers and policy-makers in Indonesia to ensure the maintenance and sustainability of the system, and moreover its capacity to save lives. With the continuous need to maintain and improve the system, the Government of Indonesia was committed to funding the maintenance of the software provided by a German software start-up company.

The system continued to evolve after the project was completed. The Indonesian Tsunami Warning System has since been tested by at least 20 earthquakes and tsunami events in Indonesia. Some events still resulted in a grave number of fatalities. These events offered lessons about how technologies and technology-related policies could also potentially increase vulnerabilities in cases where the system could not comply with geological and social complexities. Among the lessons learnt is the need to study the unintended social consequences of the technology, a perspective that was lacking in the design. There are further lessons to be learnt. First, warning system technologies have the capability to save lives, but also the ability to generate false warnings, for example when an earthquake triggers a tsunami warning but it is not followed by a tsunami. The economic losses due to public evacuations are significant and often lead to compromised trust in the system by the public. Second, the system was designed as a seismic-based system in a moderately short time (five years). This limits the system's capacity to respond to the complex and cascading risks of tsunamis that are not generated by earthquakes. This was the case with the 2018 Palu earthquake liquefaction underwater landslide tsunami, resulting in at least 1,000 fatalities

due to the tsunami alone (UNDRR et al., 2019), followed by a tsunami in the same year with 500 fatalities in the Sunda Strait. Third, the development of warning system infrastructure needs to be paired with sufficient public education, as it can potentially create a false sense of security and misleading expectations about technologies. Some communities relied on local knowledge and being able to sense strong ground shakes to self-evacuate in the past, but they now rely on sirens and official tsunami warnings before evacuating. Such a false sense of security could prevent people from deciding for themselves and self-evacuating within the critically short time frame between the earthquake and tsunami, as experienced during the 2010 Mentawai tsunami, which resulted in more than 500 fatalities (Rafliana, 2015; Yulianto, Rafliana, Febriawati, & Aditya, 2023). In conclusion, technologies need to be continuously improved in addition to acquiring a better understanding of the earth's dynamics as well as changing societies. More importantly, the role of public education and preparedness is paramount.

Based on the experiences from this German-Indonesian cooperation, improvements in transnational cooperation in the science and technology domain are not only necessary, but also critical. This can be achieved by moving from a donor–recipient paradigm to a more symmetrical partnership approach, adopting risk-sharing and by better understanding the unique nature of knowledge cooperation. It is important to recognise non-material contributions, such as the feedbacks derived from using the technologies, which contribute to knowledge co-production. In the context of science and technology, collaborations come with opportunities for boosting intellectual property rights and marketing promises. However, this also presents questions on how symmetrical the cooperations can be when considering the different interests and motivations behind them. Building symmetrical bridges in transnational cooperation creates the foundation for common and collective outcomes for science and technology, which – in the case of the Indonesian Tsunami Warning System – are to save lives.

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From individual to systemic impact: transnational networks and the meso-level of change

Eva Lynders

Abstract

Transnational networks can play a crucial role in tackling complex challenges in sustainability transformations at political, societal and technical levels (Göpel, 2016; WBGU, 2011). Monkelbaan (2019, p. 36) frames them as "informal institutions linking actors across national boundaries and involving various aspects of global governance in new and informal ways", referring to Wessel (2011).[27] The scope, depth and urgency of the necessary transformations ahead of us easily leads to a sense of individual inefficacy: "The systems" seem too all-encompassing for any single individual to make a difference. However, this perspective might underestimate the role of individuals at a meso level of system change in transnational networks. Exploring the mechanisms of cooperation in these networks and the paradigms defining their goals can help us understand their potential impact for political and societal transformation.

Transnational networks and their potential for systemic change

Transnational networks exist in various fields and sectors, while some of them cut across both in working towards a shared purpose. In the context of research and policy dialogue, transnational networks provide a huge potential in "making ideas matter" (Stone, 2015, p. 794) – and through this set joint agendas. Transnational knowledge and policy networks can provide new spaces for participation, help to develop shared problem definitions and even enable dimensions of shared identities among those involved in it (Stone, 2015, pp. 798 and 808). In practical terms, they can hold the potential to connect "communicative discourses" (Schmidt, 2008) from the global level back to different "publics" on the national and even sub-national levels (see, similarly, Stone, 2015, pp. 794-795) and to guide "coordinative discourse" by creating, elaborating and justifying programmatic ideas (Schmidt, 2008, p. 310) among transnational and national policy communities. Networks both constitute own, and bridge different, epistemic communities (Haas, 1992).

If we integrate transnational networks into the multilevel perspective on transitions (Geels & Schot, 2010; Göpel, 2016), they can be understood as connecting "regimes" or the "meso level". Referring to interaction and cooperation, Messner and colleagues frame the meso level as "the direct point of confluence of interpersonal and interinstitutional dimensions" (Messner, Guarín, & Haun, 2013, p. 27).[28] Network members who exchange on perspectives and develop joint understandings of challenges are simultaneously involved in relevant fora of administrative and/or political decision-making, as well as in transnational research and science-based policy advice. The model of the multilevel perspective on system transformation illustrates the relevance of this "point of confluence" for system change.

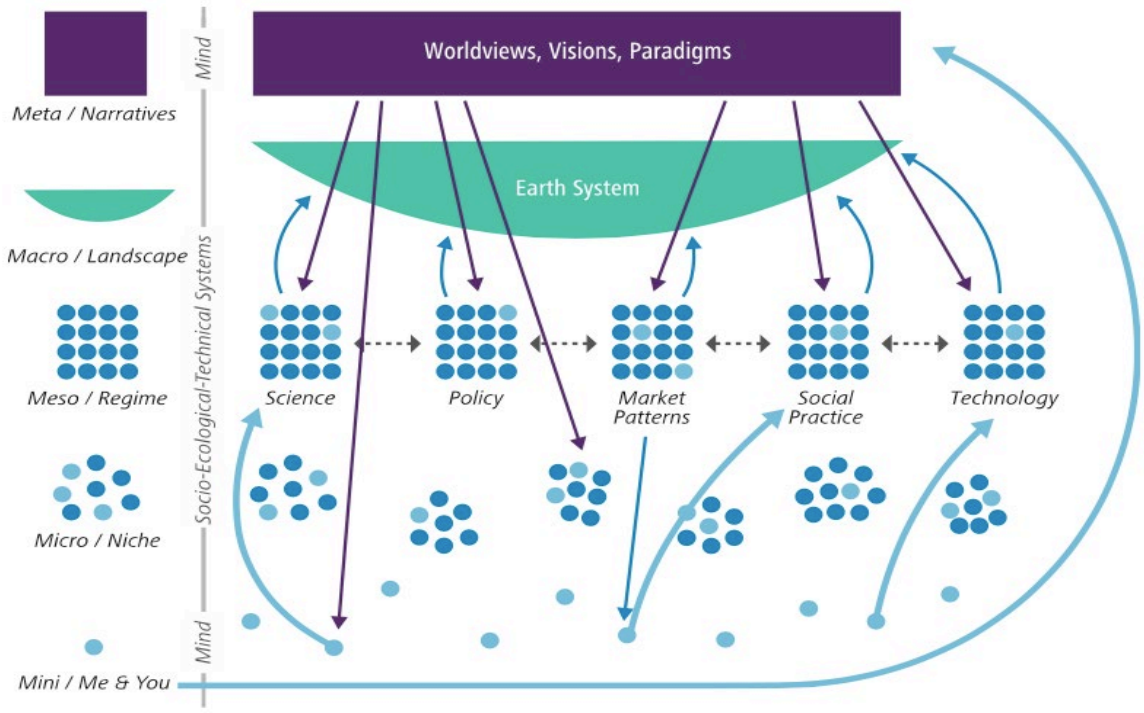
For her adjusted version of the multilevel perspective model (see below), Göpel states that it is "the mini-level of individuals that makes up any institutional setup and the meta-level of mind-sets that cut across and mediate between the structurations on the niche and regime level and individual

27 Wessel cites Anne Marie Slaugther and David Zaring (2006), *Networking Goes International. An Update*. It is important to note that the authors refer to transgovernmental networks, which are composed of "national government officials" (Wessel, 2011, p. 257), whereas transnational networks can include "subnational and non-state actors" (Monkelbaan, 2019, p. 36).

28 It has to be mentioned here that the criterion of the meso dimension as individuals "who speak on the behalf of others" (Messner, Guarín, & Haun, 2013, p. 26) is not necessarily met in transnational knowledge and policy networks.

actors" (see Figure 3; Göpel, 2016, p. 47, closely referring to Geels & Schot, 2010). When situated at the regime level, transnational knowledge and policy networks could connect various regimes (e.g. science and policy) while their members simultaneously belong to the mini level and interact as individuals in specific contexts (see also Reiber and Eberz in this volume).

Figure 3: Mindsets in the multilevel perspective on transformation



Source: Göpel (2016, p. 47), Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

In its basic setup, the multilevel perspective differentiates three interacting organisational levels in society relevant for system change. On the niche (or micro) level, so-called pioneering activities can be enacted in the form of pilot projects or experiments with alternative solutions for challenges, if the interdependencies with other system levels are not too strong. For these "experiments" to be scaled up, they usually need support from the regime level, in which the niche level is embedded. This level comprises well-established structures and/or institutions in which change happens much more slowly than on the niche level. The structures represented at this level tend to stabilise the status quo (illustrated here as "Science", "Market Patterns", "Technology", etc.). The regime level, in turn, is embedded in the landscape or macro level. This level captures overall "configurations" of a given system, which are, according to the original multilevel perspective approach, hard to change in the short term. Examples could be phenomena such as climate change as well as deeply rooted institutions, social values or cultural beliefs. Although hardly accessible to direct intentional change itself, sudden changes or shocks at and from the macro level have the potential to also reach and "trigger" the self-stabilising processes of the sub-systems (Göpel, 2016, p. 22).

Göpel adds a meta level to the original model, which represents worldviews, visions and paradigms. Her argument points to the qualitative difference between earth system parameters (as equivalent to the landscape level in the original model) and the level of paradigms and worldviews. The latter are more accessible and have potential effects on the embedded levels with regard to system transformation. According to Göpel, visions, worldviews and paradigms can be directly affected by the "mini" or individual level (the second extra level added in this version of the multilevel perspective), while in turn having the potential to affect the micro or niche level as well as the regime level (Göpel, 2016, pp. 47-48). In this (expanded) multilevel perspective on system

transformation, all levels – from the niche to the meta level of the paradigms that define the goals of the system – are open to individual and network influence.

The model visualises how changes in worldviews, visions and paradigms can be potentially relevant for systemic changes at all other levels. Although individual mindsets inform initiatives on the niche level and might provide the framework for what is considered possible on the regime level, according to this model, the individual level is the only one with direct "access" to the meta level, which can, in turn, change the overall paradigms and frameworks for institutions, policy-making and social practices. In other words: Individuals thus do have (possibly substantial) agency in bringing about sustainability transformations in complex systems. Meadows described paradigms as "[t]he shared ideas in the minds of society, the great big unstated assumptions – unstated because unnecessary to state; everybody already knows them – […] or deepest set of beliefs about how the world works" (Meadows, 1999, p. 17). If transnational research and policy networks indeed hold the potential to "make ideas matter" beyond national discourses, a focus on the meso level of change processes leads to questions on which new paradigms are necessary to leverage this potential in order to address the "interwoven sustainability emergencies" (Stoddard et al., 2021) we are facing – and which skills and expertise will help us develop them.

Competencies for transnational cooperation

The concept for "future literacy" framed by the International Social Science Council and UNESCO constitutes an example of a methodology that could help develop such new paradigms. It is defined as the

> capacity to imagine futures that are not based on hidden, unexamined and sometimes flawed assumptions about present and past systems. […] "future literacy" offers an approach that systematically exposes such blind spots, allowing us to experiment with novel frames for imagining the unknowable future, and on that basis, enabling us to critically reassess actions designed in the present. (International Social Science Council & UNESCO, 2013)

Within the T7 (Think7) Task Force "International cooperation for the global common good" of 2022, a method called "Future Design" was suggested to overcome deadlocks in today's negotiations and policy-making by developing solutions from a future perspective of 2050 (Tatsuyoshi, Shrivastava, Setälä, Schmidpeter, & Islam, 2022). The implementation of such innovative concepts and methods might require a stronger focus on process expertise in policy advice, which "offers advice on the process for designing collaboration in collaboration" (Molinengo, Stasiak, & Freeth, 2021). The authors emphasised a multi-disciplinary understanding of expertise and define process expertise as consisting of "knowledge on process design (content) for planning collaborative arrangements with policymakers in advisory settings (operational context) by facilitating knowledge co-production among involved actors (process)" (Molinengo, Stasiak, & Freeth, 2021, p. 3).

Transnational cooperation is a rapidly emerging form of sustainability governance (Monkelbaan, 2019, p. 53). Transnational research and policy networks such as the G20/T20 as well as transnational city networks such as C40 (Cities Climate Leadership Group) or ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) provide a promising field for investigating if and how new paradigms and patterns of transnational cooperation are emerging – and in how far they could inform cooperation paradigms for global governance in a broader sense.

In the context of governance for sustainability transformations,[29] inter- and transnational cooperation might also require a re-evaluation of the paradigms that underpin cooperation in its current forms and formats. Messner (2022) provides examples of critical perspectives, especially on European and "Western" cooperation patterns in the international context: Eurocentrism instead of universalism; double standards regarding crises and challenges, depending on their effects (or lack thereof) on European and Western countries; and a lack of fairness and reciprocity, illustrated for instance in the distribution of risks and costs of climate change and mitigation measures (Messner, 2022, pp. 5-6). Perspectives like these bring up questions on which fundamental paradigms of cooperation "define the rules"[30] in the current global governance system (see also Ruppel and Schwachula in this volume). Pursuing such endeavours of knowledge cooperation and dialogue on the "big great unstated assumptions" in transnational and trans-sectoral networks such as the Managing Global Governance network provides multifaceted opportunities to derive reflections and practical insights. At the same time, it underlines the imperative to "practise what we preach", question our own "unstated assumptions" and train our "future literacy" as researchers. We need to jointly develop new paradigms to define the rules of transnational cooperation for the immense transformations needed in the current decade and beyond.

29 Monkelbaan (2019) presents a theoretical framework for "Governance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)"; other authors choose the more general term of "governance for sustainable development". The focus here is put on governance modes that hold the potential to enable and/or support comprehensive system transformations (used here in accordance with the definition provided by the WBGU as the "worldwide remodeling of economy and society towards sustainability" (WBGU, 2011, p. 5); for the term "transition", which is sometimes used synonymously, see Paul Raskin et al. (2002, p. 3).

30 According to Meadows (1999), paradigms define the rules of a system, which in turn shape further parameters of its functioning.

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The role of training and dialogue formats for transnational cooperation

Tatjana Reiber & Isabelle Eberz

Abstract

The world faces major and interrelated challenges, with crises occurring at increasing speed and intensity. At the same time, the architecture to develop effective global responses is weak. One way to foster conducive conditions for transnational cooperation is to qualify change makers from diverse national and sectoral backgrounds and to provide them transnational spaces for dialogue and exchange. The German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS) runs two international formats that provide such spaces and networks for dialogue: the Shaping Futures – African-European Network on Development and Sustainability[31] (Shaping Futures) and Managing Global Governance (MGG), both featuring an Academy as their core element.

Introduction

The world faces major and interrelated challenges – climate change, changing demographics, increase of non-liberal powers, refugee and migration movements as well as global health issues such as the Covid-19 pandemic – that are highly complex and interrelated. Furthermore, the speed and intensity with which global crises occur and overlap are increasing. The Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the climate and biodiversity crisis are manifestations of a "Polycrisian world", which is seemingly becoming the new normal (Kostakos, 2021).

At the same time, the architecture to develop effective global responses is weak. While a healthy, peaceful and secure world is not possible without transnational cooperation (Messner & Scholz, 2018; Odusola, 2017), aligned visions for the way forward are missing (Messner & Scholz, 2018). After more than a decade of major international power shifts and growing importance of various world regions, trust, mutual understanding and channels of communication between and to these newly relevant actors are still missing (Messner, Guarín, & Haun, 2013). Instead, geopolitical and ideological tensions are on the rise. The current international environment is fragmented and polarised; liberal multilateralism and the world order are highly contested (Börzel & Zürn, 2021; Messner, 2022). Processes of understanding, transnational cooperation and transformative responses are thus needed more than ever.

One way to foster conducive conditions for transnational cooperation is to qualify changemakers from diverse national and sectoral backgrounds and to provide them spaces for dialogue and exchange. Such changemakers are highly qualified professionals with the motivation and vision to contribute to the global common good.

Fostering transnational cooperation through dialogue formats

The Academies at IDOS work under the premise that future changemakers need a broad knowledge base, inclusive and collective leadership skills as well as visionary thinking to lead cooperative and transformational change processes (Brundiers et al., 2020; Kafka, Seghezzi, Villaronga, Blome, & Althoff, 2015; Wiek, Withycombe, & Redman, 2011). Thus, the formats support participants in their professional as well as personal development by providing space to

31 The Shaping Futures programme was carried out under the name "African-German Leadership Academy" from 2021 to 2023.

exchange and expand knowledge and by strengthening and enhancing key competences to enable transnational cooperation.

The training and dialogue formats of IDOS foster transnational cooperation in three ways:

1) They provide a platform for dialogue and establish channels of communication to overcome fragmentation, create mutual trust and develop a joint vision of the world order (see also Ruppel and Schwachula in this volume).

2) They focus on the development of key competences for transnational cooperation and transformation, thereby strengthening the capacities of both individuals as well as institutions.

3) They identify and connect future changemakers in various professional sectors, countries and academic disciplines, thereby developing a transdisciplinary and transnational network of changemakers.

1. Platform for dialogue to develop trust and a joint vision

The Academies provide a platform for dialogue, in which different perspectives, opinions, values and attitudes can be expressed, discussed and jointly reflected upon. This is a first necessary step to overcome global fragmentation and polarisation. For this reason, the Academies at IDOS are designed as labs for global cooperation (Fues, 2018; Messner, 2017), in which actors from different countries, sectors and disciplines come together to discuss, learn and foster cooperation for the global common good. Simultaneously, participants also engage in shared sense-making, build and nurture joint narratives, and work jointly through differing – at times competing – world perspectives to develop a common understanding and vision of the world, with all its complexities and trade-offs.

In order to enable open exchange and joint narrative development, the Academies are guided by a human-centred, holistic learning approach, which includes personal and emotional dimensions and puts a strong focus on trust- and team-building activities. In an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, participants can move from polite but superficial conversations to deep and controversial dialogues beyond their national and sectoral contexts, while also exchanging on contested issues, including differing values.

Within the Academies, there are different learning formats offered in which participants engage and collaborate in various contexts to develop an understanding about complex situations and different (at times differing) world views. One example of such a learning format is the simulation of multi-stakeholder processes that invites participants to navigate competing needs and perspectives. Through the role embodiment of different stakeholders, the lived experience of negotiating in new roles as well as the collective reflection afterwards, participants discover and discuss new perspectives in practice (Thatcher, 1986) and learn how to establish communication channels for the negotiation of joint agreements in a transnational space. Participation in the Academies – or these labs for global cooperation – allows the participants to gain positive experiences of practised cooperation in a transnational setting and enables them to seek and continue the cooperation beyond their current contexts.

2. Strengthening key competences for transnational cooperation and transformation

Individuals who aim to initiate and drive transformative and transnational change processes need to have specific competences. Here, cooperation and transformation competences serve as overarching and collective terms, which subsume a set of further competences necessary for working together transnationally for the global common good. Cooperation is an interaction between at least two actors; thus, reciprocity and relationship-orientation are fundamental for

cooperation. Furthermore, in transnational spaces, where actors of different traditions and schools of thought interact, communication skills, conflict management and reflexivity are of great importance. This includes the ability to reflect one's behaviour and values, become aware of (one's) thinking patterns, and be able and open to changing perspectives by engaging in dialogue and open feedback (Reiber, 2019). In general, transnational cooperation is much more likely to take place when people trust each other (Messner et al., 2013). Therefore, cooperation competence also includes the ability to engage with others in shared activities to learn, grow and build trust. This entails, in cases of conflicts, listening to differing opinions and searching for compromises and solutions. This is even more necessary and challenging when actors have to bridge different contexts, institutions, values and belief systems.

Transformation competence is also important to navigate and manage transnational cooperation, and it is broadly understood as the ability to think "outside of the box", develop alternative visions for the future, and identify new and unexplored paths to reach them. This includes identifying and seizing opportunities, forming alliances and designing spaces where new knowledge, strategies, ideas and tools can be developed, probed and tested. In order to challenge the status quo and existing patterns, changemakers also need a systemic understanding of global interconnections and interrelations within complex systems – from the local to a global level (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019; Reiber, 2019). As today's world is characterised by complex, global, overlapping and quickly changing challenges, future changemakers must navigate in a highly volatile environment and deal with potential conflicts, contradictions and trade-offs; insights in other (national) contexts and other actors' experiences add to the ability to consider complex causes and transnational effects.

The conceptualisation of the Academies as cooperation labs encourages and requires participants to practise cooperation in different settings. Participants engage in experiential and free learning spaces, in which they put their knowledge and skills in small-scale team projects into action. For example, through design thinking, participants strengthen their transformation competence as they embark on an open exploration phase to identify new and innovative solutions to challenges. The group's diversity in terms of disciplines, sectors, nationalities and languages enables the participants to explore the projects' challenges from various perspectives and develop inclusive solutions. It also practises team skills, as the teamwork in diverse settings poses challenges to overcome potentially competing ideas to identify commonly agreed solutions. The positive experience of lived cooperation between people of various backgrounds further strengthens participants' confidence and trust in future transnational and diversity-driven cooperation in seeking solutions to shared challenges, which contribute to the global common good.

3. Identifying and connecting changemakers

Individuals play a crucial role for transformation processes, and consequently, selecting the right participants is critical for creating impact. There is a vast literature on the role of "agents of transformation" (Kristof, 2010; Schneidewind, 2018; WBGU, 2011) who act as pioneers of social change by developing and demonstrating alternative solutions and challenging established patterns of thinking and acting.

Participants of the Academies at IDOS are early to mid-career professionals coming from diverse disciplines and sectors (academia, business, public sector, civil society and media). At this career stage, participants still have the time to take part in a time-intensive training programme, to develop visions of their future leadership style and to form long-term relationships. The focus lies on individuals who are actively engaged and committed to putting their competences to use to advance transformation processes for the global common good – locally and beyond. Being a leader and changemaker is thereby not necessarily associated with certain leadership positions within an organisation, but rather based on the understanding that everyone can be a leader within his/her context and environment (Rotberg, 2007, cited in Asante et al., 2020). However, participants are

assumed to take up future key positions that allow them to serve as multipliers in their institutions, in international events and processes, and in their networks that initiate change processes (Blankenbach & Reiber, 2012).

The Academies empower future changemakers by connecting them to like-minded people from diverse backgrounds in the formative years of their careers. These encounters provide opportunities for mutual learning, the sharing of perspectives and experiences, as well as finding inspiration, role models and mutual support, thereby promoting and multiplying a culture of cooperation and transformation. In this sense, connecting individual changemakers – also across borders and narrow work contexts – contributes to creating a "critical mass" that can push for change, move outside of niches, make alternatives for transformation visible and accessible, and thereby create tipping points for transformation (Hebinck et al., 2022; WBGU, 2011).

In practice, the relevance of connecting changemakers manifests in many ways. Alumni of the Academies initiated virtual "accountability circles" to discuss change projects, motivate each other and seek support in challenging situations. Many alumni value the solidarity and the free spaces to think and discuss in the network – particularly in times of shrinking spaces for critical voices (Baldus et al., 2018) – and highlight how much encounters with other like-minded people give them hope and energy, adding to their resilience (an element particularly needed during times of crisis, such as a pandemic, for instance). Others find cooperation partners to develop ideas and projects that are geared towards sustainability transformations and the global common good – and they scale these up by implementing them in a transnational context. On a more aggregate level, individual connections can also be the starting point for professional networking and mutual learning between institutions, thereby contributing to joint knowledge creation or agenda-setting for the global common good through transnational cooperation.

The individual as starting point for transnational cooperation

Given global interdependencies, challenges are often global and most of the time transcend nation-state contexts. Thus, transnational cooperation, which aims to tackle today's challenges, depends on many factors, such as power, resources, culture and time (among others). It is a long-term and challenging endeavour. Taking individuals as starting points is nevertheless important because transnational cooperation is shaped by individuals. Actors' ability to engage in transnational cooperation can be enhanced by strengthening individuals' cooperation and transformation competences, establishing communication channels to engage in dialogue and providing access to transnational support structures and networks. Actors who have participated in labs for cooperation have experienced and practised how to overcome diverging interests and nurture common ground for collaboration.

Furthermore, individuals that form a network of changemakers act as frontrunners and important role models for innovative forms of transnational cooperation, thereby forming niches of change (see also Lynders in this volume). Pioneering ideas, practices and competences can be scaled up when actors show how they work and transfer them to their home institutions and societies. What starts with individuals can change modes of cooperation.

Shaping Futures and the MGG Academy

The academies of Shaping Futures and MGG bring together young and mid-career professionals from the public sector, research institutions, civil society and the private sector. The main objective of the Academies is to support and prepare changemakers for a professional and personal life dedicated to global cooperation and sustainable development. The participants of Shaping Futures come from Côte d'Ivoire, Europe, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Zambia, Senegal, Tunisia and Togo. The participants of the MGG Academy come from Brazil, China, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Mexico and South Africa.

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Transnational and transdisciplinary knowledge networks as a tool to foster cooperation: how to unfold transformative potential through investing in alumni network development

Johanna Vogel

Abstract

Networks are becoming more important as a tool to facilitate the cooperation of like-minded actors in increasingly complex settings, within and beyond borders as well as between and across scales. Transnational and transdisciplinary knowledge networks can provide a structure that enables cooperation and offers promises of flexibility and adaptability. This paper focusses on transnational and transdisciplinary knowledge networks formed by alumni – people who have engaged in collective learning experiences. The paper shares five lessons on how multi-stakeholder interactions in transnational networks can be fostered to unfold transformative potential and create societal impact. From a network member's perspective, the network needs to be relevant to the current stage of his or her professional life – while also contributing to the greater common good that the respective group is aiming for. Investing in trust, a shared vision and values as well as providing structures of self-organisation are especially effective instruments for increasing cooperation to work on complex challenges.

Introduction

In an interconnected world, facing an increased amount and density of challenges – climate change, political crises such as the Ukrainian War or global health threats such as the Covid-19 pandemic – we need cooperation and transformation competences[32] more than ever to meet these challenges. In times of insecurity, accelerating threats and an increasing complexity of societal challenges, networks are becoming more important.

Networks are a tool to facilitate the cooperation of like-minded actors, within and beyond borders as well as between and across scales. As Eva Lynders elaborates in her paper: Networks have the potential to allow for new forms of participation because they connect the individual level with other levels of interaction. Individuals are the ones who interact, and yet it is through national governments, lobby groups as well as non-governmental or international organisations – that is, the entities they belong to (and represent) – that they reach leverage points to create wider societal impact and transformation in the long run. An individual can create awareness for new ideas in their social spaces (sometimes amplified via media coverage), and yet, to create actions, a broader basis and more resources are needed. Through networks, individuals can "hinge" different debates and institutions, thereby enabling a collaboration that bridges – and ideally aims to reduce – traditional inequalities and power structures,[33] by mobilising resources and creating space for mutual dialogue and joint learning. In brief: Transnational and transdisciplinary knowledge networks can provide a structure that enables cooperation and offers promises of flexibility and adaptability.

32 Eberz and Reiber elaborate in detail in this volume what cooperation and transformation competences include.

33 Ruppel and Schwachula have elaborated in this volume on strategies to work with and around traditional power inequalities and structures, especially between the Global North and the Global South due to historical legacies. In all our learning and dialogue formats, we aim to take the key principles of dialogue, plurality, inclusive decision-making and reflexivity into account to support power-sensitive forms of collaboration.

This paper focusses on transnational and transdisciplinary knowledge networks formed by alumni – people who have engaged in collective learning experiences at the start of their network journeys. These types of networks, built on personal relations, have a special potential to engage in collaborative work and create a wider impact in society due to the additional level of trust between members. Transnational and transdisciplinary networks can be a laboratory to experiment with effective and efficient ways of cooperation that foster transformation. The paper shares lessons learnt from 15 years of network experience and theoretical reflections of the Managing Global Governance network. These recommendations though are relevant for any kind of transnational and transdisciplinary knowledge networks.

Five lessons on how multi-stakeholder interactions in transnational networks can be fostered to unfold transformative potential and create societal impact

The recommendations are derived from a literature review on alumni management and literature on network development from the social movement context (Holley, 2012; Plastrik, Taylor, & Cleveland, 2014). These findings have been applied to practical insights and experiences from alumni networks (Vogel, 2021). Five recommendations support knowledge networks to fully unfold their transformative potential and create societal impact with their network activities.

1. Align network activities to the needs of your target group

One of the bigger challenges of networks that depends on voluntary engagement – that is, projects and tasks within the network are not (a core) part of the members' professional lives – is how to motivate and ensure engagement. The most promising way to keep alumni engaged is when network activities address the specific needs of their members (Wömpener & Rohlmann, 2009). This is particularly challenging, but not impossible in very diverse networks; transnationality in itself might act as an incentive to keep the connection (attraction of other perspectives). In different life phases, different factors determine the alumni's capacities to participate. For example, often for alumni in their 30s to 40s, family and professional duties have increased and there is less time to interact.

2. Establish and nurture trustful relations[34]

Successful networks of any type, including transnational networks, rely on nurtured relationships. The fundamental basis on which relations are grounded is trust (Holley, 2012). Trust allows network members to economise information, increases efficiencies, transaction costs are lowered and decision-making processes are simplified. This would be particularly relevant for transnational networks, as they tend to operate over long distance with longer intervals of only virtual or no personal interactions at all. Trust supports knowledge-sharing while facilitating cooperation and shared problem-solving, which are all core functions of successful networks.[35] Elements of trust (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000) that help networks to nurture trust in working practices can be: benevolence and confidence; reliability and predictability; competence; honesty; openness as well as familiarity.

34 Reibers and Eberz also mention the aspect of trust-building and working on a joint vision. In our learning and dialogue formats, we enhance competences through dialogue formats that build trust and create a joint vision.

35 Trust is also a major driver needed to support the acknowledgment and appreciation of knowledge, expertise and skills from the Global South, and to work towards decreasing traditional power structures between the Global South and the Global North, as Ruppel and Schwachula have elaborated in this volume.

3. Initiate and continually work on a collective identity

A value debate can take place in the form of a collective identity process, or "we-identity". We-identities are a set of collective norms and beliefs that support the building of mutual trust (Högl, 2018; Messner, Guarín, & Haun, 2016). Ideally, we-identities are created together[36] within the network and encompass dimensions such as the network's purpose, vision, mission, competences, values and leverage points. Transformative networks then need to establish a shared future narrative to create projects with social impact beyond their network. What is the network's vision and mission for the future? What is the network's purpose? Which leverage points do the network members see for creating impact? This process should be participatory and collective. The whole network should be able to contribute in order to create legitimacy. A collectively established we-identity can function as a guiding framework for the network's actions.

4. Invest and provide supporting structures, especially communication channels

To be successful, networks should create supporting structures that enable (joint) action. Supportive structures within a network can include setting up communication systems, digital community platforms, helping people to use social media, enabling and supporting collaboration processes, as well as evaluating and reflecting on the network's impact. Again, this is particularly relevant for transnational networks operating over greater personal distances.

5. Enable self-organisation

One of the most crucial elements for transformative networks is creating supporting structures that include setting up and initiating self-organisation within the network. Self-organisation is the engine of collaboration projects in networks. It is also the aspect that is most likely to bring transformation (Holley, 2012). Network facilitators' main goal should be to enable self-organisation and facilitate the implementation of collaboration projects. Network facilitators should also regularly promote an active feedback culture as well as evaluation mechanisms for (joint reflection on) the network's impact.

Jointly providing solutions to global challenges?

Networks are an incremental part of many aspects of contemporary society; not least, alumni networks are present in most parts of the world as reference points for those who have gone through programmes of formal education.

Global issues demand collaborative solutions and cannot be tackled by one nation or one actor alone; first, agreement needs to be reached on the priorities for tackling the challenges on a global scale so that important actors are – or can be – brought on board. Communities and societies need to cooperate in order to collectively define the problems and find the solutions, thereby including a variety of perspectives and increasing the legitimacy and local suitability of suggested solutions. Consequently, specifically transnational knowledge networks have a great potential to support societal change. In order to unfold societal impact, dialogue and communication spaces should be transnational, transdisciplinary and enable systemic thinking – which means understanding the individual spheres of the world as connected. Transnational and transdisciplinary networks bring together actors from different countries and diverse disciplines who are working jointly with a

36 When jointly discussing and negotiating the network's values, the network members should also reflect about roles, positions and privileges due to historical inequalities in order to reflect power structures and aim for a fairer collaboration, as Ruppel and Schwachula suggested.

common aim. In the diversity of perspectives and bundle of capacities lie the key to collectively defining problems and creating innovative solutions. Networks can also offer a culture of flat hierarchies, which allow for participation and integration – further essential ingredients to collectively define solutions for global challenges.

From a network member's perspective, the network needs to be relevant to the current stage of his or her professional life – while also contributing to the greater common good that the respective group is aiming for. Investing in trust, a shared vision and values as well as providing structures of self-organisation are especially effective instruments for increasing cooperation to work on complex challenges. Investing in network structures in an interconnected world can help with efficiency within and beyond existing structures and thereby create global impact.

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