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Partnerships for Sustainable Development

**Emergence, Adaptation and Impacts in Global and Domestic
Governance Contexts**

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VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT

Partnerships for Sustainable Development
Emergence, Adaptation and Impacts in Global and Domestic
Governance Contexts

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. F.A. van der Duyn Schouten,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
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Voor mijn moeder, Kaling Chan-Chow, met respect en liefde.

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List of Acronyms

ACCA21	Administrative Center for China's Agenda 21
BRIC(S)	Brazil, Russia, India, China (and South Africa)
CAN	China Civil Climate Action Network
CANGO	China Association for NGO cooperation
CBIK	Center for Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge
CCICED	China Council for Int. Cooperation on Environment and Development
CEPF	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund
CGGD	China Going Green Dialogues
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CI	Conservation International
CLASP	Collaborative Labeling and Appliance Standards Program
Col	Country of Implementation
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
FOF	Function-Output Fit
G77	Group of 77 (coalition of 132 developing countries)
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GGSD	Good Governance in Sustainable Development Partnership
GIF	Generation IV International Forum
GITSI	Global Initiative Towards a Sustainable Iraq
GNESD	Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development
GONGO	Governmentally Organized Nongovernmental Organization
GPPI	Global Public Policy Institute
GSPD	Global Sustainability Partnerships Database
GVEP	Global Village Energy Partnership
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency

IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
IO	International Organization
KBA	Key Biodiversity Area
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MOF	Ministry of Finance (China)
MRV	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
MSW	Mountains of Southwest China biodiversity hotspot
NDRC	National Development and Reform Commission
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization
NPM	New Public Management
ODA	Official Development Aid
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PAWS	Partners for Water and Sanitation
PEFC	Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification
PEPS	Promoting and Energy-efficient Public Sector
PFSD	Partnerships for Sustainable Development (UNCSD registered)
PRC	People's Republic of China
PrepCom	Preparatory Committee
PVC	Polyvinylchloride
REEEP	Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership
REN21	Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century
Rio+20	United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
SEE	Society of Entrepreneurs and Ecology
SWS	Safe Water System
TNC	The Nature Conservancy
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNCBD	United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

UNCHE	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment
UNCSD	United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development
UNDESA	United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UNGC	United Nations Global Compact
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	US Agency for International Development
VU	VU University Amsterdam
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WEHAB	Water, Energy, Health, Agriculture, Biodiversity
WNU	World Nuclear University
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) in Stockholm could be regarded as the beginning of international environmental diplomacy. Delegations at UNCHE agreed on principles to preserve and enhance the natural environment (the so-called 'Stockholm Declaration'). UNCHE also set in motion a process of institutionalization of an environmental policy field, both in international and domestic governance. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established to promote international cooperation and to review the world's environmental situation. National governments responded by setting up agencies dedicated to environmental protection. At the time of UNCHE only 26 governments had such agencies, by 1992 the number was up to 144 (Haas 2003: 85).

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED)¹, presented a document called 'Our Common Future' which coined and defined the term sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Development 1987). At the 1992 UN Conference on

¹ Better known as the Brundland Commission, named after its chairman Gro Harlem Brundtland.

Environment and Development (UNCED, also known as the 'Earth Summit') in Rio de Janeiro, sustainable development emerged as the quintessential challenge and development strategy in global politics. Governments agreed to a comprehensive action plan, 'Agenda 21', to integrate environmental and development concerns; to fulfill basic needs; to improve living standards; and to manage and protect ecosystems. Moreover, three conventions were agreed upon at this summit: the Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), and the Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Arguably, sustainable development as a leading development strategy proved to be a major success in terms of political responses, both at the global level of governance and among national governments. Within a few years most national governments had adopted sustainable development policies (i.e. 'Local Agenda 21'), and set up national institutions dealing with sustainable development. Ten years later, at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, however, world leaders were confronted with a sober assessment on most aspects of sustainable development, as - among other things - air, water and soil pollution continued to deteriorate, and the income gap between developed and developing countries continued to widen. While sustainable development had gained wide recognition, its realization was thwarted by a lack of institutional capacity, a lack of funds, and - perhaps - by too many commitments and promises. Many felt that, rather than new declarations and agreements, implementation was needed, hence the WSSD was also dubbed 'the Summit on Implementation' (Ivanova 2002). Amidst the

quest for better implementation, Partnerships for Sustainable Development, also known as 'type II outcomes', emerged as alternative governance arrangements. The empirical focus of this thesis is on this set of over 430 multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Partnerships have been suggested as innovative arrangements in environmental and development governance (Arts, Leroy, and Tatenhove 2006, Glasbergen and Groenenberg 2001, Brinkerhoff 2002). In a more radical view, partnerships could even replace state-centered governance, making 'governance without government' possible (Reinicke 1998, Witte, Reinicke, and Benner 2000, Reinicke and Deng 2000), the effective production of global public goods and services in absence of supranational authorities. But even if partnerships or similar arrangements would not replace 'traditional' state-centered governance, proponents argue that partnerships could complement existing environmental governance. Partnerships could address implementation and participation deficits (Haas 2004); they could engage hitherto underrepresented transnational actors (Witte, Streck, and Benner 2003; Streck 2004), and improve accountability and democratic quality in global governance (Bäckstrand 2005, 2008). Indeed, partnerships have come to embody many promises to overcome the discrepancy between sustainable development as a strategic goal and its realization. However, observers warn that partnerships are not quite the panacea for sustainable development (Dodds et al. 2002, Ivanova 2002, Bäckstrand 2006b). Partnerships potentially undermine public authority and state capacity to address sustainable development (Litzinger 2006). Moreover, partnership processes can distract from

multilateral governance, masking or even leading to intergovernmental inaction (Hens and Nath 2003). Questions have also been raised towards the nature of governance that partnerships help to bring about. Partnerships could play a role in the privatization of global environmental governance (Pattberg 2004), for instance by allowing corporations to extend their influence (Miraftab 2004b). Partnerships could even repress democratic debate by promoting a culture of non-confrontation and by preventing radical alternatives to sustainable development (Poncelet 2001).

Amidst opposite claims about partnerships in global sustainability governance, this research focuses on empirical evidence from the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. The purpose of this dissertation, however, goes beyond the immediate question whether partnerships live up to their promises (in terms of better implementation, greater accountability and norm-setting). Rather, it is the aim of this dissertation to bring closer global and domestic realities that are gathered under the epitaph of global sustainability governance. The first reality is that partnerships are not only a feature of global governance, rather they are also part of specific, domestic and local, governance. Therefore Partnerships for Sustainable Development are both global and local instruments. Surprisingly, this 'vertical dimension' of partnerships in global governance has largely been neglected. Current literature on Partnerships for Sustainable Development primarily discusses their influence and role in multilateral governance (Steets 2005, Ivanova 2002, Bäckstrand 2006a, b). The influence and the role of partnerships in multilateral governance, however, cannot be

extrapolated to specific governance contexts. Several studies indicate that global transnational engagement sometimes hinders similar engagement in domestic and local governance contexts. For instance, the engagement of women's rights organizations in UN processes have not necessarily led to their empowerment in Venezuela (Friedman 1999) and Bangladesh (Chowdhury 2009, 2011). This vertical transnational dimension has yet to be explored for Partnerships for Sustainable Development. The second reality is the fact that partnerships are not necessarily a new phenomenon. While partnerships are often discussed in terms of the 'newness' they bring into 'global' politics (Rhodes 1996, Risse and Lehmkuhl 2006, Biermann and Pattberg 2012), for instance by involving previously disregarded political actors, or, by introducing alternative means of international coordination (Cashore 2002, Cutler, Haufler, and Porter 1999), neither the juxtaposition of the 'old' and the 'new', nor of the 'global' and the 'domestic' should be presumed. To the extent that partnerships represent a certain newness, this newness can only be understood against existing political contexts, whether global or domestic. Partnerships are also part of existing ('traditional') governance. Consequently, Partnerships for Sustainable Development do not constitute an entirely new reality, rather they are conceived within an existing international system and they interact within existing political and institutional contexts. Accordingly, the influence and role of partnerships is likely differentiated across different implementation contexts. The UN specifically refers to domestic implementation contexts as 'countries of implementation' (Kara and Quarless 2002). Countries are not blank

territories that facilitate global governance functions, rather, they constitute domestic structures (Risse-Kappen 1995) that mediate the influence of global regimes and instruments. By positioning the research area between the realms of global and domestic governance, this thesis contributes to a progressive understanding of partnerships as a phenomenon at multiple levels of global sustainability governance.

This introductory chapter will continue with a conceptual elaboration of partnerships and subsequently focus on the main research questions of the present study, addressing the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, their adaptation to domestic implementation contexts and their impact on global and domestic governance. After discussing theoretical approaches, an iterative research strategy will finally be proposed.

1.2 Defining partnerships

The term 'partnerships' evokes many associative meanings. In a more general and social understanding, partnerships relate to a sentiment of connectedness and a perception of interdependency. Partnerships can refer to a social objective, rendering social and emotional meanings of togetherness and equality. From a governance perspective, however, partnerships are not primarily seen as objectives. Rather partnerships are institutions, their meaning being derived from their functionality; their aims; or, their organizational constellations. Partnerships are made more substantive by the addition of nouns and adjectives: public-private, private-private,

public-public, business-NGO, business-science, et cetera. Sometimes partnerships are specified by their objectives and functions, such as strategic partnerships, implementation partnerships, and standard setting partnerships. In other instances, nouns indicate the themes partnerships seek to address: sustainable development partnerships, health partnerships, energy partnerships, climate partnerships, water partnerships, et cetera. The addition of nouns, objectives and adjectives confirm that partnerships by themselves are considered institutional headings, not objectives in themselves. When scholars and policy makers refer to partnerships with an almost casual assumption of a common understanding, they usually refer to an institutional notion. Rather than giving one definition of partnerships as an institution, in the following three notions of partnerships are presented. In particular, partnerships are referred to as an organizational notion, as a governance instrument and as a mode of governance (see figure 1.1.). This threefold exposition of partnerships as institutions emphasizes how partnerships in governance are institutionally nested: they are institutions, they are institutionalized at multiple levels of governance, and they constitute forms of governance.



Figure 1.1 Different but related understandings of partnerships

Most scholars agree on several organizational characteristics of partnerships (see Schäferhoff, Campe, and Kaan 2009, Pattberg et al. 2012). Partnerships are considered an organizational type that features a collaborative arrangement between two or more actors (partners). This thesis focuses on transnational partnerships, partnerships with at least one transnational actor as a partner. The terms transnational and non-state are often used synonymously. Arguably, the term transnational actor is preferable because transnationality emphasizes the fact that governance is not the sole domain of the state (Willetts 2001). While ‘non-state actor’ defines transnationality negatively, the term ‘transnational actor’ assumes a more explicit understanding of potential partners in public governance, including multinational corporations (MNCs) and other companies, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), international organizations (IOs), epistemic

communities, academia, faith based organizations, media, et cetera. Any such listing will be incomplete and many actors do not easily fit into a state or non-state category. For instance Governmentally Organized Nongovernmental Organizations (GONGOs), state owned enterprises, state media, and political parties, feature both state and non-state attributes. Some transnational actors are not considered as potential partners in partnerships in public governance, in particular transnational illegal organizations such as terrorist organizations, separatist groups and criminal syndicates. Another organizational attribute of partnerships in governance is the fact that partners are assigned responsibilities. They share risks and pool (material and non-material) resources. They participate in decision-making and the management of the partnership to reach common goals. Collaboration and shared responsibilities set partnerships apart from more hierarchical arrangements, for instance between contractors and sub-contractors. The partnership as an organizational form features a collaborative network, relying on horizontal rather than hierarchical coordination. Hence, partnership as an *organizational type* can be defined as a transnational network that aims to collaborate on shared goals. This definition is broad because it does not specify functions that partnerships seek to fulfil, neither does it specify policy areas, nor does it enumerate the number and types of constellations of partners. This 'substance poor' definition of partnerships could be criticized for being "conceptually empty and merely politically expedient" (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011, 14). Nonetheless, the analytical purpose of observing a broad and

inclusive definition is to subsequently refine the understanding of partnerships through closer empirical observations.

Partnerships have increasingly been seen as a *governance instrument* in global governance. International bodies like the UN and the EU consider partnerships instrumental in specific problem areas (Linder 1999). One such area is sustainable development. The empirical focus of this thesis is on Partnerships for Sustainable Development as a specific set of partnerships upon which the international community agreed at the WSSD in 2002. What distinguishes Partnerships for Sustainable Development from other sustainability partnerships is their relation to global sustainability governance. Partnerships for Sustainable Development were approved and registered at the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) to implement internationally agreed sustainable development policies, such as the Millennium Development Goals, Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Because Partnerships for Sustainable Development are a set of just over 340 registered partnerships, their absolute impact on global sustainable development is limited. However, their most important function may be to demonstrate the potential of partnerships and to inspire the formation of many more partnerships.

Finally, partnerships can also represent a *mode of governance*, or 'partnership governance' when they become embedded in specific governance contexts. Subsequently, a more or less generalized pattern of governance emerges which features the regular involvement of non-state actors through partnership arrangements.

Partnership governance in different implementation contexts may feature variations in terms of participatory, functional, sectoral, and country-specific characteristics. By observing partnership governance in specific implementation contexts, the present research provides a nuanced and empirically founded account of the emergence and influence of partnerships. The three understandings of partnership, as an organization, as a governance instrument, and as a mode of governance, are distinct but related. In this thesis, organizational attributes of partnerships are analyzed in order to explore the role and influence of partnerships as governance instruments.

1.3 Research questions

This dissertation asks questions from a governance perspective and is driven by an interest to better understand the effects of partnerships on specific (national and local) governance contexts, leading to the main research question:

Why did Partnerships for Sustainable Development emerge in global sustainability governance; how were they adapted to domestic governance contexts; and what has their impact been on global and domestic governance?

The main question consists of three related questions:

- Why did Partnerships for Sustainable Development emerge in global sustainability governance?

- How were partnerships adapted to domestic governance contexts?
- What has been the impact of partnerships on global and domestic sustainability governance?

These questions share a focus on the linkage between global and domestic governance. Accordingly, the present research follows two successive lines of inquiry. The first relates to partnerships in the context of global governance. The second line of inquiry addresses partnerships in the context of domestic governance, in particular in China². Since the present thesis is structured in the form of a compilation of articles (already published or in the process of publication), research questions are addressed in multiple chapters. Along the first line of inquiry, Chapters 2 and Chapter 3 respectively address the questions of emergence and diffusion of partnerships as instruments in global sustainability governance. Moreover, Chapter 4 investigates the impact of partnerships on global sustainability governance. The second line of inquiry focuses on partnerships in China and – to a lesser extent – partnerships in India. Chapter 5 investigates the effects of global transnational engagement on domestic governance and the domestic development of partnerships. Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 address the question of domestic adaptation of the sets of Partnerships for Sustainable Development implementing in China (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7) and India (Chapter 7). These chapters also address the question of the

² In the current thesis 'China' refers to the People's Republic of China (PRC).

impact of partnerships in their respective domestic governance contexts. Chapter 8 addresses the questions of local adaptation, impact on local governance and transnational engagement through a case study.

This dissertation emphasizes how partnerships interact with current non-western implementation contexts for partnerships. The role of partnerships in western implementation contexts has been extensively studied (e.g. Harding 1990, Rosenau 2000, Kouwenhoven 1993, Grimshaw, Vincent, and Willmott 2002). This dissertation plays to the strength of the governance perspective to locate newness in institutionalization processes, and to identify and characterize extensions of modes and instruments of governance beyond a predominantly western-shaped political order. It is not the aim to criticize 'western methods', rather, in describing and locating the extension of partnerships into specific implementation contexts, this research identifies compatibilities and incompatibilities between global and domestic governance contexts.

1.4 Theoretical approach

1.4.1 Governance perspective

This thesis proceeds from a governance perspective, which assumes more encompassing forms of steering and the encapsulation of a greater set of societal relations compared to traditional international relations. Hence, governance scholars emphasize post sovereignty (e.g. Karkkainen 2004, Held 2000), the idea that sovereign states are not the only nor the natural bearer of decision making power; and

transnationality, the idea that non-state actors have increasingly become political actors (e.g. Willetts 2001, Risse-Kappen 1995). A defining feature of the governance perspective is the conceptual focus on institutions rather than on political actors, as Dingwerth and Pattberg observe “the most fundamental observation we make when we make use of our global governance lens is not the existence of specific actors (e.g., states), but the existence of norms, rules, and standards that structure and constrain social activity” (2006, 199). Hence, a global governance perspective challenges to discern new sources of authority, new governance arrangements, new actors and new policy areas in global politics. Partnerships lend themselves for studies from a governance perspective because they embody shifts in governance: they bring in new actors, and they deploy new governance norms and methods. Moreover, partnerships are nested in a wider net of global and domestic institutions and share the post-sovereign, transnational, and non-traditional topical (sustainable development) characteristics that governance scholars emphasize. This dissertation adopts a governance approach because it helps to connect individual partnerships to a larger institutional field of partnerships. Alternative, actor oriented, approaches may miss out on the structuring effects that partnerships have as institutions nested in domestic and global governance contexts.

One should, however, take into account the limits of institutionalism. A governance lens may lead to an overemphasis of the institutional nature of social change and human behavior. Global governance as a perspective has been criticized for its tendency to downplay the role of politics (e.g. Latham 1999), for instance by emphasizing problem-

solving and management. Global governance as a perspective may also lead to a false impression of an overly regulated world, while it actually is messy and dotted with many instances of 'non-governance' (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2010). The emphasis on newness and shifts may, moreover, lead to a disregard of existing arrangements such as states (Compagnon, Chan, and Mert 2012). A discussion of partnerships in global governance may become abstract and distant from specific geographies. Partnerships – even if they aim at global sustainable development – are geographically defined as they operate in local environments. Absolute contributions to sustainable development are manifest in domestic and local contexts, for instance in an improved local environment, economic development, policy innovations and poverty reduction. This dissertation takes into account these limits by emphasizing specific global and domestic implementation contexts that reconnect processes of institutionalization with politics and existing governance arrangements.

While most governance literature emphasizes the multilateral dimension in global governance, an emphasis on specific governance contexts befits James Rosenau's inclusive understanding of global governance as a "systems of rule at all levels of human activity – from the family to the international organization – in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions" (1995, 13). This definition expresses the relevance of social interactions beyond international institutions and politics in tangible settings such as families and international organizations. "Systems at all levels of human activity" indicates that

institutionalization takes place in different governance contexts which are not necessarily related. This seeming ambiguity towards the comprehensiveness of global governance and the interrelation between systems conveys a degree of disorganization and political strife which is also present in the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. However, partnerships also seem to fit in a more comprehensive global sustainability governance. Their designation as implementation instruments at the WSSD suggest complementarity with existing global governance. Partnerships fulfill a policy function (policy implementation) which is procedurally linked to a more or less coherent global political system. In this system decision-making remains in the hands of political leaders. This 'systemic' view of partnerships at the global level of governance has also been implicit in the work of a majority of scholars studying Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Governance scholarship have relied on precepts of liberal institutionalism (see Bäckstrand 2006b) which assumes a structuring effect of international institutions in international relations. Partnerships supposedly complement existing international institutions by addressing 'governance deficits' (Haas 2004). For instance, a perceived lack of legitimacy in international sustainability governance could be countered by partnerships because they widen the scope of engagement by transnational actors. Similarly, the lack of implementation of international agreements could be defied by the deployment of implementation partnerships, such as Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Subsequently, literature on Partnerships for Sustainable Development predominantly discuss partnerships in

terms of whether or not partnerships fulfill certain functions at the global level of governance (Steets 2005, Ivanova 2002, Bäckstrand 2006a, b). While this systemic approach at the global level of governance has rendered important insights on how partnerships might respond to perceived functional gaps in governance at the global level of politics, partnerships do not only reflect legalization and institutionalization of sustainable development at the global level (e.g. Bäckstrand 2006b, 2005, Andonova and Levy 2003, Pattberg et al. 2012, Death 2010), they are also part of multiple systems of rule at several levels of governance. In particular domestic and local rule systems influence the operations and the effectiveness of partnerships. In governance contexts contestations over the role and definition of partnerships persist. For instance, intergovernmental agreement on Partnerships for Sustainable Development has not prevented considerable disagreement over the meaning and interpretation of partnerships (see Chapter 3). These differences become still more visible when global partnerships operate in specific implementation contexts where global strategies and operations are adapted.

Subsequently, in this study of partnerships, a governance approach is applied which emphasizes the political contingency of specific governance contexts. Rather than assuming a progressive institutionalization and legalization of partnerships at the global level governance, this dissertation explores the limits of an institutionalist view of Partnerships for Sustainable Development (see Chapter 2). By moving the analytical focus from partnerships at the global level of governance to partnerships in specific implementation contexts, the

politics of partnership (see Chapter 3) will be situated in specific political processes and political-geographies. This is important because institutionalist discussions of Partnerships for Sustainable Development have – often unwittingly –depoliticized developing countries by regarding them as receivers of assistance with little influence over local implementation. This dissertation applies a governance perspective to questions relating to the emergence, adaptation and governance impacts of partnerships.

1.4.2 Emergence

The emergence of partnerships in global sustainability governance has often been explained from an institutionalist perspective. This thesis focusses on several institutionalist theories that seek to explain of the emergence of partnerships, in particular, functionalist institutionalism, network theories, and so-called new institutionalism (Chapter 2). From a functionalist perspective institutional change and the emergence of new governance instruments can be understood as a rational response to shortcomings in governance, for instance to governance deficits (Haas 2004). Apart from functionalist institutionalism, other institutionalist perspectives vie to explain the emergence of partnerships. Scholars have questioned whether partnerships are rational responses to functional needs. New institutionalism scholarship, for instance, has observed that policy makers do not decide on the basis of rational and comprehensive analyses, but they rather base their decisions on preconceptions, and pre-existing normative judgments (Flinders 2005). Certain institutional models are repeatedly used and certain solutions are

considered socially fit. Historical contingency is also implied in John Kingdon's (1984) streams model, in which the emergence of new policies and policy instruments follows a confluence of problem, policy, organizational and socio-economic streams that create windows of opportunity for institutional collaboration. Subsequently, the emergence of partnerships is a function of supply and opportunity, rather than functional demand. Finally, the emergence of partnerships has also been attributed to processes of globalization (Kenis and Schneider 1991, Kooiman 1993, Mayntz 1993, Reinicke 1998, Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002). According to this reasoning, network type of organizations such as partnerships are better suited in a political economy where resources are dispersed and where other forms of organization (for instance hierarchy or markets) are unable to deliver optimal public goods (Reinicke 1998). Each of these institutionalist theories provides plausible explanations for the emergence of partnerships, and emphasizes the fact that partnerships are linked to a larger institutional context. Yet applying institutionalist governance perspectives on partnerships may lead to an overemphasis on the institutional nature of social change and human behavior, and a downplaying of the political nature of the emergence of partnerships. Partnerships for Sustainable Development, for instance, have been defined and developed in a political process. Chapter 3 focuses on the political contingency of partnerships by reconstructing the international negotiation process that led to Partnerships for Sustainable Development as an official outcome to the WSSD. Moreover, the chapter discusses the political uses of partnerships and their impact in limited policy areas.

1.4.3 Adaptation

Political ambiguity in the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process and the flexible nature of partnerships implore a closer investigation into how partnerships are diffused and how they are adapted to domestic governance contexts. The diffusion and adoption of policy innovations in domestic governance contexts depend on international and transnational channels that transmit ideas about new instruments; domestic structures; and the characteristics of policy instruments (Busch, Jörgens, and Tews 2005).

The importance of international organizations in diffusing new policies and instruments has been widely acknowledged (e.g. Koremenos et al. 2001, Fink 2013, Bearce and Bondanella 2007). International organizations build networks and enable socialization and learning (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007)³. The UN in particular play a role in collecting, aggregating and disseminating information about policies and instruments (Koremenos et al. 2001). In doing so, the UN have promoted certain governance norms as appropriate for states to uphold (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). Partnerships for Sustainable Development as an outcome of deliberations in the WSSD process seems to affirm the importance of

³ Competition and coercion have also been mentioned as diffusion mechanisms (Dobbin, Simmons, and Garrett 2007). Coercion assumes a hegemonic and dominant actor in international relations, however such an actor is largely absent in global environmental governance. Competition assumes that countries compete to be innovative and to be early adopters of partnerships, however, developing countries have generally been late adopters.

the UN in diffusing policy instruments (Chapter 3 and Chapter 5). However, diffusion does not imply that modes of governance in different parts of the world are converging. Even when governments agree on sustainable development policies and instruments, their subsequent implementation and application in domestic and local governance cannot be assumed. Rather, diffusion and domestic adoption will depend on domestic structures and the characteristics of the diffused instruments and policies.

Scholars have observed how the adoption of governance instruments across national and local contexts depends on domestic intervening factors (e.g. Kern, Jörgens, and Jänicke 2005, Tews and Busch 2002, Lenschow, Liefferink, and Veenman 2005, Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth 1992). Domestic and local institutions provide a context which can impede or facilitate policy change (Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth 1992) and the likelihood that a government adopts new policies and instruments increases when there is an 'institutional fit' between existing institutional arrangements and new policies and instruments (Knill and Lenschow 2000, 30). Subsequently, the diffusion of instruments and policies across countries with similar conditions occurs with greater ease than across dissimilar countries. Similar outcomes can also be a result of governments and other actors reacting similarly, especially when they share structural similarities. For instance, the adoption of partnerships across the West is to some extent explained by the fact that governments reacted independently, but in comparable ways, to similar problems (Fink 2013). Conversely, partnerships may not fit well with governance in developing and authoritarian countries. Some even

argue that non-OECD countries lack the political and economic institutions that constitute contemporary governance (Senghaas 1993). Finally, the diffusion and adoption of partnerships in new governance contexts depends on characteristics of the diffused policies and policy instruments. Policy innovations in the form of more abstract models, for instance, are more easily adapted to a wider range of governance contexts (Dimaggio and Walter 1983). In that sense, the flexible structure of partnerships, in terms of types of partners, organizational structure and goal formulation, and their voluntary character allow for considerable adaptation (Witte, Streck, and Benner 2003b). Moreover, the political agreement on Partnerships for Sustainable Development left considerable ambiguity over their meaning which helped them to be acceptable and transferable across a wide variety of implementation contexts. Subsequently, the diffusion and adoption of partnerships in specific governance contexts is relatively uncomplicated compared to traditional governance instruments, in particular laws and other binding regulations. Partnerships do not require lengthy and costly procedures for reaching international agreement, ratification, or the amassing of popular and political support. However, the question how partnerships adapt to their immediate institutional and political environment becomes more pressing. To answer this question, Partnerships for Sustainable Development should not only be regarded as a phenomenon in global politics, but also as a domestic or even local process.

The current research focuses on the adaptation of partnerships to specific implementation contexts, in particular China and to a lesser

extent India. By exploring patterns of adaptation of Partnerships for Sustainable Development to these implementation contexts, the study of diffusion of partnerships is taken beyond the superficial observation of the mere presence of partnerships across different countries. The flexible conceptualization of Partnerships for Sustainable Development allows for domestic reconfigurations to better correspond to domestic structures. By examining prevalent reconfigurations in certain implementation contexts it is possible to determine whether and to which extent partnerships have become embedded (chapter 6). Moreover, comparisons between sets of partnerships in different governance contexts allow for an assessment of domestic implementation contexts as key explanatory factors in the implementation and organization of Partnerships for Sustainable Development (Chapter 7). Adaptation at the micro-level also takes place within specific partnerships. Micro-level adaptations demonstrate how individual partnerships adapt to local implementation contexts and how conflicts between global and local partnership approaches are resolved (Chapter 8). This thesis conveys the general idea that instruments and partnership processes continue to be subject to adaptation and reformulation, also after they have been agreed upon in international political processes.

1.4.4 Governance impacts

The present thesis investigates governance impacts of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. While impact can be conceptualized in different ways, this study mainly addresses the questions whether partnerships lead to more effective global sustainability governance;

whether partnerships are a vehicle for extending global approaches to governance; and, how global transnational engagement through partnerships affect governance and transnational engagement domestically.

1.4.4.1 Effectiveness in global sustainability governance

According to some scholars partnerships facilitate 'governance without government' (Reinicke 1998, Witte, Reinicke, and Benner 2000, Reinicke and Deng 2000). Rather than a complete re-imagination of world politics, however, most scholars view the role of partnerships in a reformist light, partnerships are regarded as potentially complementing and improving existing global governance. For instance, partnerships can engage hitherto underrepresented transnational actors (Benner, Streck, and Witte 2003, Streck 2004); and they can improve accountability and democratic quality (Bäckstrand 2005, 2006a, b, 2008, Steets 2005). Proponents of partnerships in global governance tend to emphasize the potential of partnerships to widen participation, and to enable effective solutions for sustainability challenges. Impact can therefore be conceptualized as 'effectiveness', the extent to which partnerships have led to more effective governance of sustainability challenges. Theoretically, this question is reminiscent of the question of emergence, because institutionalist understandings of the emergence of partnerships also assume a certain functional or institutional rationality. Subsequently, partnerships can be assessed in terms of whether they answer to assumed institutional shortcomings. In Chapter 4 Partnerships for Sustainable

Development are assessed in terms of their performance regarding certain governance functions, in particular norm implementation, norm development, and norm inclusiveness.

1.4.4.2 Extending global governance?

While scholars with functionalist understandings of institutional effectiveness tend to pay less attention to the political contingency of institutions, others question the type of governance that partnerships ostensibly bring about. For instance, partnerships can lead to “privatization by stealth” (Van der Wel 2004), replacing often democratically elected public authorities (Litzinger 2006). The widening of participation in itself does not safeguard equitable representation, for instance, partnerships processes could provide opportunities for large corporations to extend their influence, while other stakeholders, in particular poor and disadvantaged communities, remain marginalized (Miraftab 2004a). Moreover, partnerships foster a culture of non-confrontation which seems at odds with democratic debate which assumes confrontation and radical alternatives to the current notion of sustainable development (Poncelet 2001).

Critics of neoliberal globalization have been most outspoken about the nature of global governance (Overbeek 2005, Overbeek et al. 2010). The purpose of global governance, according to Stephen Gill (e.g. 1998, 2000), is to institutionalize the representation of capital and to ensure its global reach. According to Gill, this purpose is in opposition to mass democracy. Subsequently, global governance attenuates contradictions between capital and democracy by

building a social economic order where potentially recalcitrant political actors are co-opted. The role of partnerships in this critical understanding is twofold. Firstly, partnerships are instrumental in the reconfiguration of the state (Gill 1998, 25); they introduce market values and discipline in the public sector, and they redefine the borders between the public and the private sector. For instance, partnerships have been used by New Right governments as a derivative form of privatization (Linder 1999). Partnerships have also aimed to introduce market mechanisms in sustainable development, for instance 'payment for ecosystem services', or various emissions trading schemes. Secondly, partnerships can be deployed as a measure to deal with what Gill (see 1998, 26) calls 'dislocations', the negative effects of limiting democratic representation and authorizing greater influence of capital. Partnerships address externalities such as environmental damage and poverty, while they lend justification to the notion of sustainable development as sustained economic growth (see Mert 2012, Miraftab 2004a). Rather than questioning neoliberal globalization, partnerships help to remake a type of governance that protects capital, empowers the private sector, and helps the privatization of public responsibilities. The set of partnerships investigated in this dissertation can only be partially reflective of larger purposes in global governance, however Partnerships for Sustainable Development are unique in their outspokenness towards their goals in global sustainability governance. Registration with the UNCSD requires them to be explicit on the internationally agreed outcomes they seek to implement. Moreover, Partnerships for Sustainable Development are

not only global arrangements, in an operational sense they are also rooted in domestic implementation contexts. While global partners may formulate their own strategies, partnerships have to cope with existing implementation contexts that may not be equally compatible. Chapter 8 presents a study of a particular partnership, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), which is characterized by an avowedly neoliberal design, especially towards the role of the state. However, discrepancies between global normative approaches and domestic governance contexts require a tempering of neoliberal norms, or at least the adaptation of CEPF's neoliberal approaches.

1.4.4.3 Transnational linkages

This research also investigates the impact of global transnational engagement on domestic transnational engagement. The transnational dimension in global politics has been long recognized. In the early nineteen seventies, Keohane and Nye (1971, 736) conceived of global politics “not as the interaction between states, but the interaction between many actors”. They specify significant actors as those that are autonomous, control resources that are relevant to a certain issue area, and participate in politics across national boundaries to influence other actors (1971, 344-345). The transnational perspective therefore accords significance to a host of actors that had been relatively neglected in international relations. While this transnational perspective may be considered a paradigmatic change in the understanding of global politics, it does not effectively do away with the fundamental assumption of a

separate and distinguishable international sphere of politics. Although Keohane and Nye's transnational perspective accords a role to domestic politics, it only does so to the extent it concerns international politics. This is evident in what Keohane and Nye referred to as the "domesticization of international politics" (1971, 726), the fact that governments are often concerned with the internal politics of other governments because they influence international politics. In other words, the analytical domain of transnational relations remains limited to the international sphere. A global governance perspective could potentially depart from this limited perspective of transnationalism. Not only does global governance acknowledge authority beyond the inter-state system, it also perceives the transnational as a political sphere (Rosenau 1995). Partnerships also expand transnationalism beyond the limitations of international politics as they feature interconnectedness between different types of actors while they operate within a multi-level governance environment. Many scholars, however, concentrate on the greater legalization and institutionalization of environmental issues at the global level (e.g. Bäckstrand 2006b, 2005, Andonova and Levy 2003, Pattberg et al. 2012, Death 2010). While such a focus befits the institutionalization of sustainability concerns at the global level, it is also a limited horizontal focus on international and supranational politics. Transnational engagement is more than a feature of international or supranational politics. A focus on the vertical dimension of transnationalism seems appropriate as governance is increasingly understood as constituting of multiple and interconnected levels (Vogler 2003, Hooghe and Marks 2001).

Multilevel governance scholarship has generally remained silent on the topic of partnerships. Rather, studies on the vertical aspects of transnationalism have been conducted in relatively specific subject areas. Therefore, Elisabeth Friedman (1999) argues for a ‘reversed transnationalism’ perspective which designates vertical linkages between transnationalism in global governance and their influence on domestic and local governance contexts.

The present study explores the vertical dimension of transnational engagement and interactions (Chapter 5), asking the question whether the institutionalization of partnerships in global governance influenced domestic and local governance in terms of the development of partnerships and civil society in China. Moreover, Chapter 8 investigates whether global transnational partnerships empower civil society at the local level.

1.5 Research strategy⁴

Most empirical studies of partnerships in sustainable development and environmental governance take the form of case studies, examining local and national level partnerships (Selin 1999, De Rynck and Voets 2006, Bassett 1996, Williams et al. 1991), or transnational partnerships in certain policy areas (Betsill and Bulkeley 2004, Tully 2004). These studies render deep insights on particular partnerships, but they are also difficult to compare, as they apply different

⁴ This section is partly based on an earlier published introductory section of a book by the Partnerships research group at VU University Amsterdam (Pattberg et al. 2012).

frameworks and methodologies. Moreover, the predominance of case-study approaches results in a bias towards 'good practices' and towards the more visible partnerships, building an overly supportive case for partnerships (Pattberg et al. 2012, 5). Rather than focusing on one or a few cases from the start, an iterative research strategy was adopted, employing a large-n database approach combined with qualitative approaches. The iterative approach can be interpreted as a case selection process. A large-n approach towards partnerships allows for an aggregated view of partnerships and facilitates comparisons between different policy fields and countries (Chapter 2 and Chapter 4). Analyzed datasets become more specific as Partnerships for Sustainable Development are investigated in the Chinese and Indian implementation contexts (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7). Finally, a case study was conducted on an individual partnership to explore micro-level strategic and operational adaptations (chapter 8).

1.5.1 Selection of cases

UNCSD registered Partnerships for Sustainable Development

To avoid taking a normative position based on studies of limited sets of partnerships, the present research focuses on a larger set of partnerships, Partnerships for Sustainable Development registered with the UNCSD. Methods and variables are consistently applied to render individual partnerships and sets of partnerships comparable. Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, respectively analyze the emergence of partnerships and their overall effects. The empirical focus on the

whole set of registered partnerships allows a solid empirical base for the subsequent analyses of partnerships in local implementation contexts. Moreover, the sample of Partnerships for Sustainable Development is also representative of a single political process. Chapters 3 and 5 respectively analyze the political context of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process, and the transnational influence of this process.

Partnerships in domestic implementation contexts

The study continues to explore limited sets of partnerships that implement in China and India (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7).⁵ The choice to focus on the Chinese implementation context is partly informed by the fact that China has been (and continues to be) an important target country for the implementation of global sustainable development policies. Most studies of partnerships in China focus on individual partnerships, and expound little on the role and influence of partnerships on governance in China. Kishan Khoday (2007), for instance, discusses implementation of several UN-private sector partnerships in China without explicating their role in China's sustainability governance. The lack of empirical research has not prevented a debate over the potential of, and constraints to, partnerships (Wong, Tjosvold, and Yu 2005, Adams, Young, and

⁵ The choice for countries as implementation contexts is informed by the UNCSD's registration category for partnerships, which asks partnerships for their respective countries of implementation (CoI). The role of partnerships in China's sustainable development is explored through the deeper investigation of the set of UNCSD registered partnerships that claim to implement (part of) their activities in the mainland of the People's Republic of China.

Zhihong 2006, Turner 2003). A few studies explore the influence of the UN and other global governance institutions on specific topic areas in China, for instance, the influence of the UN on environmental education (Roch, Wilkening, and Hart 2007), the influence of transnational networks on the emergence of NGOs in China (Morton 2005a), and the influence of international aid on China's environment (Morton 2005b). However, the role and influence of global sustainability partnerships on governance in China remains a largely unexplored topic. Another reason for the empirical focus on China is the fact that relatively many Partnerships for Sustainable Development (55) report implementation activities in China. In addition, this set of partnerships seems to be relatively effective in terms of producing task-relevant outputs (Chan 2012). This is remarkable since partnerships in China are a rather new phenomenon, and Chinese government and nongovernment stakeholders have relatively little experience with partnerships. The Chinese institutional context does not seem predisposed towards the application of instruments that invite the participation of – for instance – independent civil society organizations. While one might not expect many partnerships to be implementing activities in China, many do and with seeming success. In that sense, China could be seen as a 'crucial case', or "A least-likely case (...) one that, on all dimensions except the dimension of theoretical interest, is predicted not to achieve a certain outcome and yet does so." (Gerring 2007, 232). However, social scientists have warned about conducting crucial case studies (Sekhon 2004, Gerring 2007). 'Crucialness' depends on the formulation of the theory to be tested, which in

social science almost never attains the status of a causal law. The fact that Partnerships for Sustainable Development are found across the most diverse implementation contexts is difficult to attribute to a single cause. In that sense, the fact that partnerships exist and even may thrive in the Chinese implementation context should not be regarded as a test case for other – less complicated – implementation contexts. Rather, this study aims to explore the operations and adaptations of partnerships in the specific implementation context for partnerships in China.

This study also features a comparison between partnerships in India and China, which contributes to a better assessment of domestic implementation contexts as a key explanatory factor in the adaptation of partnerships (Chapter 7). The empirical subset of partnerships in India was chosen because of the very different political and institutional context that India represents. While China lacks political pluralism and real influence for citizens, India's implementation context features more political pluralism, and relative freedom and autonomy of civil society. The focus on the subsets of partnerships in China and India is also informed by the fact that both countries are gaining weight in international relations and are even referred to as 'Asian drivers of global governance' (Humphrey and Messner 2006, Messner and Humphrey 2006, Kaplinsky and Messner 2008) or 'Chindia' (Ramesh 2005). India and China illustrate that developing countries are not mere 'target countries' for partnerships, passive subjects at the receiving end in global governance processes. By aiming at a deeper understanding of contemporary Indian and Chinese implementation contexts for

partnerships, this dissertation moves beyond a purely analytical purpose. It acknowledges these implementation contexts as political contentious arenas rather than passive contexts subjected to institutional innovations.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund

Finally, the present study focuses on a particular Partnership for Sustainable Development in the Chinese implementation context (Chapter 8). The choice of the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is informed by the fact that it represents one of the very few Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China that actually builds local partnership networks. Therefore this case allows for an assessment of the potential of partnership governance in China, whether partnerships can lead to long-term patterns of involvement in the form of partnership networks, and which characteristics such networks would have. The focus on a particular case also allows a micro-level perspective on how the CEPF adapts strategically and operationally to better fit the Chinese implementation context.

1.5.2 Methodologies

Database approach

Part of this research is based on the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database (GSPD), developed by the partnerships research team at VU University Amsterdam between 2006 and 2009. A database approach allows for a better understanding of the larger phenomenon of partnerships beyond the restricted focus of single cases. Moreover, database research can reveal correlations between

variables, while testing and generating hypotheses. In spite of these advantages, database approaches have scarcely been employed. A notable exception is the work of Liliana Andonova and Marc Levy (2003), analyzing a large part of the set of Partnerships for Sustainable Development investigated in this thesis. In some respects their work is the precursor to the database analyses in this thesis, and to the work by our research group on Partnerships for Sustainable Development (Pattberg et al. 2012). Benefiting from the availability of more data, for instance on reported results, the number of variables and data was expanded in the GSPD. The UNCSO website and database (UN 2006a) provided basic information regarding the characteristics of partnerships. This information was adapted and coded into the GSPD by a limited group of researchers, adjusting for consistent interpretation of data, updated information, and additional information in case it was incomplete. The GSPD further includes dependent variables, functions and outputs by partnerships. Data was obtained through partnership websites, publications, communications with partnerships, and expert surveys conducted in 2007 and 2008. The GSPD provides descriptive data (e.g. partnership name, website, number of countries of implementation, number and type of partners and lead partners, area of policy implementation, functions performed, geographical scope, duration, and resources required) of 340 partnerships registered with the UNCSO. The GSPD also contains information about concrete activities and programs of individual partnerships. The measurement of the main dependent variable, the 'function-output fit' (FOF), is almost exclusively derived outside the UNCSO

database (see Annex 1). FOF reveals the accuracy and consistency of declarations by partnerships on their goals and functions by comparing these with their actual activities and products (output). To obtain function data, the partnerships research team studied the UNCSD website, websites of partnerships, and other publications. Data was categorized according to their declared functions. Up to three declared functions were coded. Subsequently, different types of output (e.g. publications, trainings, fund raising, to technology transfer) were conceptualized. Each partnership was coded according to these types of output. Finally, fifteen types of outputs and eleven functions were linked, on the logical basis that the presence of a specific output would indicate at least partial fulfillment of the related functions.

The GSPD database was extensively used in Chapter 2, Chapter 4, Chapter 6, and Chapter 7 of this thesis. In Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 the GSPD database was used for deeper investigations into respectively the emergence and the overall effects of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in global governance. The database was also used in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 to compare partnerships in China and India with the total set of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. The units of analysis in the GSPD are partnerships, not countries of implementation. This restricts the utility of the GSPD in understanding partnerships in specific implementation contexts. When a partnership that implements in China has a function-output-fit, it does not necessarily mean that functions and output were performed and produced in China. Therefore, more detailed datasets were used in addition to the GSPD for Chapter 6 and Chapter 7,

which included data about output and organizational structures in specific implementation contexts.

Expert survey

In addition to the GSPD the partnerships research team conducted expert surveys to collect detailed information on partnerships and their perceived effectiveness by experts: representatives of partnerships, major groups or sectors, as well as UN officials and diplomats or academics who work on partnerships or on the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. Partnerships were categorized into fourteen clusters based on their thematic focal area (e.g. water, climate and energy, biodiversity). Each expert was surveyed in her/his respective thematic area of expertise. Respondents were asked about their affiliations, areas of specialization, and roles and functions in the partnerships they work with. Subsequently, experts were asked to rate (on a scale from 1, low, to 5, high) the performance of each partnership within their area of expertise in terms of:

- their contribution towards the achievement of one of the Millennium Development Goals;
- their achievement in addressing a problem that is insufficiently covered by intergovernmental agreements;
- their achievement in mobilizing additional financial resources for sustainable development;
- their performance in generating innovative solutions for sustainable development;

- their contribution towards addressing an urgent issue within the thematic focal area;
- their achievements in including all relevant stakeholder groups.

A total of 34 surveys have been completed in 2007 and a further 30 have been completed in 2008. In total, 64 experts have evaluated the thematic partnership clusters, providing assessments on 149 partnerships in 2007 and 158 partnerships in 2008, respectively. In total, 210 partnerships were assessed in our expert survey. In the present thesis, surveys were used to test hypotheses and analyze overall effects of partnerships in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews allow interviewees to expand on their personal experience and expertise of their own accord. While questions are prepared for individual interviewees, they can share as they deem fit. Interviews have sometimes been conducted on the basis of anonymity, and all interviewees had the option to request anonymity in parts of interviews. While this interviewing method could impact on the reliability of the study, it is a more accountable method especially when topics are deemed politically controversial. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with partnership experts and policy-makers were conducted in addition to the GSPD and the expert survey by the partnerships research team in order to supplement quantitative data with background information and to shed light on the emergence process of Partnerships for Sustainable

Development. Interviewees represented various viewpoints, but were mostly involved in negotiations surrounding the Partnerships for Sustainable Development, the UNCSD, or both. They included government delegates, NGO representatives, and representatives of major groups in the WSSD negotiation process, employees of UNCSD and UNDESA, representatives of partner organizations in Partnerships for Sustainable Development, representatives of environmental NGOs, representatives of business groups and representatives of partnerships not registered with the UNCSD. In the present thesis, Chapter 3, Chapter 4, and Chapter 5 draw from interviews that were mostly held during the 16th and 17th UNCSD sessions at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Moreover, to better understand partnerships in the specific context of China, additional semi-structured interviews were held at project sites, with NGOs, representatives of partnerships and occasionally with local and central government representatives. During the course of the research and an extended stay in China the author's Chinese language abilities improved, enabling the use of Chinese language sources, and interviews in Chinese. These interviews are primarily drawn upon in Chapter 5 and Chapter 8. Chapters using semi-structured interviews contain lists of interviews, indicating interviewee, place and date of interviews.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

While a thesis in book form eases the conveyance of a single coherent thought in a narrative structure, a cumulative PhD thesis, a

compilation of articles (already published or in the process of publication), carries decisive advantages. The compiled structure allows for the exploration of different methods and theoretical approaches. Separate publications are reflective of a dynamic and creative research process, and, individual publications make immediate and relevant contributions to specific topics.

Part I (chapters 2-4) analyzes Partnerships for Sustainable Development as instruments in global sustainability governance, focusing on questions of emergence and the overall effectiveness of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Part II (chapters 5-8) focuses on the diffusion, adoption and adaptation of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in domestic implementation contexts, in particular China. It discusses China's engagement in global environmental conferences; the influence of UN processes and transnational linkages; how partnerships adapt to the Chinese implementation context; and how partnerships in China compare to partnerships elsewhere.

Chapter 2 reviews various institutionalist perspectives on the emergence of partnerships, while examining geographic, participatory, and, thematic patterns of emergence within the set of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. The diversity of theories reflect the current state of knowledge on the emergence of partnership: there is a lively theoretical discussion, but there is scarce empirical evidence pointing towards a specific theory. Discussed theories tend to take a too narrow focus on partnerships as a separate institutional entity. In fact, partnerships emerge in a heavily politically contested environment.

Chapter 3 examines the political dimension of partnerships, by focusing on their political bargaining process, their political influence, and their influence in specific issue areas. During their negotiation, Partnerships for Sustainable Development became the object of much political contestation, resulting in a weak partnerships regime. However individual partnerships still have considerable impact and political influence at different levels of governance (e.g. in the UN system, in domestic politics, and in an emerging organizational field of partnerships). Due to the absence of a strict screening and follow-up process, some partnerships are also used to gain recognition for highly controversial technologies within the UN system.

Chapter 4 analyzes the overall effectiveness and influence of the more than 340 registered partnerships, whether and to which extent partnerships close regulatory, implementation and participatory gaps in global sustainability governance. Overall, Partnerships for Sustainable Development failed to meet high expectations. Partnerships are most frequent in those areas that are already institutionalized and regulated. Most partnerships are not directly concerned with implementation. Many partnerships lack sufficient resources to make meaningful contributions towards implementation. Furthermore, partnerships seem to strengthen the participation of actors that are already influential in global sustainability politics.

Chapter 5 investigates the influence of UN processes and transnational linkages on China's sustainable development governance, in terms of institution building, policy-making, and effects on non-state actors. The institutionalization of partnerships in

the UN system and the adoption of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process have had very limited influence on the emergence of new partnerships in China's sustainable development. However, the influence of transnational interactions and international civil society on China's transnational actors seem quite significant. While not directly resulting in partnerships, these interactions have been used by some civil society organizations to gain more independence, knowledge and capacity to subsequently play a greater role in China's sustainability governance.

Chapter 6 focuses on the set of Partnerships for Sustainable Development that implements in China. It uses the GSPD to investigate whether and to which extent the partnership model has been successfully adapted and embedded in domestic governance. Individual partnerships that are active in China produce more output than partnerships that are not active in China. However, partnerships in China largely remain foreign ventures. Even if they are effective, there is scant evidence that 'best practices' are scaled up, or that partnerships lead to more fundamental reforms in China's sustainability governance.

Chapter 7 compares Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China and India. A comparative analysis allows for an assessment of very different political and institutional contexts as key explanatory factors in the implementation and organization of partnerships. In China formal political participation exists, but there is a lack of political pluralism and real influence for citizens, the potential for partnerships on the basis of equality between governmental and nongovernmental partners is limited. In India, the relative freedom

and autonomy of civil society allow for more partnership initiatives that include civil society organizations. Whether China will become a more suitable place for partnership governance will depend on domestic reform at large, but also on the growing experience with partnerships within the government.

Chapter 8 explores global partnerships in local implementation contexts, addressing the question how global partnerships adapt to the local implementation context, and, what the influence of global partnerships is on sustainable development governance in China. The empirical focus is on the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF), a global biodiversity conservation program. To become active in China, CEPF had to renegotiate its global strategy. CEPF at times had to contradict its own neoliberal global approach. Instead of supporting domestic civil society and private actions, it redirected much of its efforts and resources towards government capacity building. Moreover, CEPF strengthened the role of already stronger non-state actors, in particular international NGOs and science and research organizations. The longevity of the network that CEPF built depends on financial support as well as on government endorsement. However, it seems like CEPF's lead partner in China, Shanshui Conservation Center, has secured sufficient support and political endorsement to consolidate a pattern of involvement that was first introduced in CEPF's China program.

Chapter 9 revisits research questions and summarizes key findings. This thesis concludes with suggestions for future research and concluding thoughts.

Part I

Partnerships for Sustainable Development in global sustainability governance

2 Explaining Geographic, Thematic and Organizational Differentiation of the Emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development⁶

Partnerships have become a preferred instrument in global sustainability governance. At the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), the failure to achieve internationally agreed sustainability targets was blamed on a lack of implementation. Partnerships could, ostensibly, address this implementation gap. This chapter focuses on explaining the emergence of partnerships. While the rise of public-private partnerships as a distinct form of governance has been widely acknowledged, and many theoretical suggestions have been made, the question of why and how such partnerships emerge on the global stage remains to be answered. In the first part of this chapter various suggestions are reviewed concerning the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development from a number of theoretical perspectives of institutionalism, including functionalist institutionalism, policy network theory and new institutionalism. The second part of this

⁶ This chapter is based on a book section co-written with Christina Müller: Chan, Sander and Christina Müller (2012) Explaining the Geographic, Thematic and Organizational Differentiation of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. In: Pattberg, Philipp, Frank Biermann, Sander Chan, and Ayşem Mert (2012) Public Private Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Emergence, Influence, and Legitimacy. Cheltenham : Edward Elgar. P. 44-66.

chapter examines patterns of emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. The theories discussed here are expected to have specific implications for the geographic scope of partnerships, the policy areas in which they emerge as well as for the participation of different types of actors in partnerships. Hence, discrepancies between the theoretical assumptions and the empirically observed patterns of emergence raise the question of whether current theories provide a sufficient analytical framework for the appraisal of partnerships. The empirical assessment is based on the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database (GSPD).

2.1 Why do partnerships emerge? Theoretical perspectives

There seems to be a discrepancy between the rationale of the emergence of individual partnerships and the emergence of partnerships as an aggregate phenomenon in global environmental governance. The emergence of individual partnerships is often explained from a rationalist standpoint that depicts partners as goal-oriented and self-interested actors, seizing opportunities to create and profit from win-win constellations (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2011). Existing institutional theoretical perspectives on the emergence of partnerships as an aggregate phenomenon, however, go beyond atomized rationalist reasoning. This chapter does not offer a solution to this disagreement; however, by formulating hypotheses on patterns of emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, it will put some theoretical assumptions to test.

2.1.1 Functionalist institutionalism

According to functionalist institutionalist theory, partnerships emerge from certain perceived needs, manifested in an institutional void: an empty institutional space (Arts 2003, 34) made up by multiple functional governance gaps. Haas (2004) specifies governance gaps by listing nine governance functions (agenda setting; framing; monitoring; verification; rule making; norm development; enforcement; capacity building and financing) that are unevenly addressed in current global environmental governance. Some scholars stress the changing role of traditional foci of governance, for instance, Biermann and Dingwerth (2004) observe that states, in spite of considerable efforts, often fail to address global environmental change, leaving a functional demand for non-state actors to assume a more prominent role. As traditional institutions fail to deliver effective governance, new institutional arrangements come forward. In the current world this usually means that non-state institutions increasingly supplement old loci of global governance, namely nation-states and international organizations. The functionalist argument, therefore, hinges on the empirical observation that there are gaps in global governance, and on the consequentialist reasoning that new actors and institutions fill those gaps. As a result, normative and empirical questions of emergence become interwoven. Some scholars observe a de facto system of global environmental governance consisting of state and non-state actors, while at the same time appraising the emergence of new and alternative governance arrangements as something advantageous. This confusion often occurs subtly, for instance, Najam et al. (2004,

25) suggest that global environmental governance remains “imperfect and [...] has room for improvement”, implying that there is something like ‘perfect’ environmental governance. Similarly, Haas (2004, 8) stresses the need for new decentralized, densely networked institutions and a division of labor between “governments, NGOs, the private sector, scientific networks and international institutions”. Other scholars even see proof of a replacement: a shift in governance from a confrontational model to collaborative models on a win-win basis, from sovereign governance to post-sovereign governance (Karkkainen 2004, 75). These functionalist arguments may be plausible; however, in terms of emergence they lack a solid empirical basis. The shift in governance from older institutional forms to newer ones may prove not to be as clear-cut as has been suggested.

2.1.2 Policy network theory

The emergence of partnerships has also been viewed as the constitution of new policy networks. But policy network explanations also suffer from considerable conceptual ambiguity. For instance, Börzel (1998) noted the near Babylonian confusion about the term ‘policy network’. The term ‘network’ is used to refer to widely varying notions as analytical models, theories, and methods. A policy network could refer to a meso-economic structure applicable to all kinds of relations between private and public actors, or it could refer to a circumstantial form of governance through a specific set of relations. From a network perspective, the networks/partnerships that stand at the center of this dissertation are enabled by societal

change and technological advancement (functional disaggregation, differentiation, communication revolution). In sociology as well as in the international relations literature, the advent of networks has been attributed to a somewhat opaque process of globalization (Kenis and Schneider 1991, Kooiman 1993, Mayntz 1993, Reinicke 1998, Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002).

In connection to UN partnerships, the Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI) has been particularly influential, not only by conducting research focusing on the connection between the emergence of global public policy partnerships and globalization, but also by providing consultancy and advice to government and UN agencies. Reinicke (1997) understands globalization as a progressing micro-economic linking of markets, corporations, and units within firms. This form of globalization reflects in an organizational structure resembling a network including various non-state and state actors. From this perspective, government is still necessary, but instead of being the primary actor in traditional international relations, it is only one of many nodes in a much wider policy network. The 'rational choice' for a network-type of organization is informed by the ability to better coordinate dispersed resources under conditions of societal change. Consequently, public policy networks emerge where other forms of steering (through government hierarchy or market) are unable to deliver optimal resource mobilization and coordination. Regarding policy networks as meso-economic structures, the emergence of partnerships has often been explained by market mechanisms. According to this explanation, coordination and distribution in the environment of free markets is best served by

network-types of organization (Cutler, Haufler, and Porter 1999). While this account shares a rationalist perspective with functionalism, its vantage point is not functional gaps; rather it understands the emergence of new institutions as a derivative of economic coordination and distribution problems.

The confusion between empirical observations and normative stances remains. For instance, Reinicke (1998, 228) refers to empirical cases of global public policy networks in the fields of financial markets, organized crime and global corporations, while also arguing for “the next step toward global public policy network (...) to fill the most important gaps and establish the missing links identified in each policy domain”. The public policy network method turns up in various reform strategies by international bodies such as the OECD, the UN and the EU, for instance the European Commission’s White Paper on Governance (Commission of the European Communities 2001). This repetitive progression, generated by blueprinting of public policy networks, seems to be somewhat at odds with the network rationalist assumption that this form of governance is preferred for its ability to better coordinate and mobilize resources in a globalized world.

2.1.3 New institutionalism

Rationalist theories are goal-oriented, and take the actor’s self-interest as a vantage point. These theories assume explanatory power with actors themselves. Even though a rational actor assumption seems plausible, rationalism has encountered much criticism. The ability for actors to foresee costs and benefits, and

their ability to act upon what they deem reasonable, is restricted. Herbert Simon (1957) argued that there are limits to the rationality of people, who are also emotional and at times irrational beings. The multifacetedness of people is inevitably reflected in their actions. The limits to rationality also apply to organizations and institutions. In the field of international relations, actor rationality has been widely assumed in the so-called realist theories, which presume that power-maximizing states are the ultimate actors in global politics. However, in the same vein, one could argue that state actors are also restricted in maximizing their interests by traditions, by institutions, by non-state actors. Such a bounded environment gives leeway to a whole set of institutionalist explanations (March and Olsen 1984, DiMaggio and Walter 1983).

Notwithstanding the relatively late arrival of partnerships in global governance, the partnership model seems remarkably well established. This may relate to the fact that partnerships are often heralded as a highly flexible type of institutional arrangement. However, partnerships are not necessarily optimally adapted to meet every demand for governance. In fact, partnerships in global environmental governance are not necessarily better than the 'old school' international regimes at filling functional gaps, nor do they necessarily emerge where the need for governance is greatest (see Chapter 4). According to the new institutionalist account, partnerships do not always emerge as a result of intentional efforts; rather, emergence takes place in an organizational context, an organizational field which constrains the developmental pathways of institutions. The institutional model of partnerships is, for instance,

copied after initial success in other policy fields. Policy makers often lack time and resources to look for optimal solutions; instead they turn to a steady flow of best practices, and choose the beaten track. A public-administrative variant of institutionalism also refers to partnerships as carriers of certain societal norms. On this account, policy makers decide not on the basis of rational or comprehensive analysis, but on the basis of “a partial review [...] [of] a number of preconceived normative judgments and assumptions” (Flinders 2005, 236). These normative judgments and assumptions take shape in a (policy) network context, where ideas of social fitness and standard models emerge, which in turn result in certain preferred types of institutional arrangements (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2009). From a public administrative perspective, the emergence of institutional collaboration can also be seen as a confluence of problem, policy, organizational and socio-economic streams (Kingdon 1984). This streams theory has mainly been applied within national political systems; however collaborative windows of opportunity can also be discerned in global governance (Lober 1997). The new institutionalist perspective provides with a wide array of explanations for the emergence of partnerships and similar institutional arrangements. However, these explanations are often typically void of (political) power as an influential factor; they rather focus on structural contexts wherein reorganization of global governance occurs.

2.2 Patterns of emergence: geographic scope

For each of the theoretical perspectives discussed above, hypotheses were derived concerning expected thematic, geographic, policy area, and participatory patterns of emergence. Observed discrepancies between theoretically expected patterns and actual patterns of emergence render insight into the plausibility of different theoretical arguments on the emergence of partnerships.

The emergence of partnerships is often explained in the context of globalization, which is sometimes understood as a distinctly deterritorialized process. Indeed, in terms of modern communications, physical space does not seem to matter anymore. In terms of governance, however, most new governance arrangements are not less territorial than more traditional arrangements. According to Saskia Sassen (2002), globalization is a distinctly territorialized process, taking place in financial centers, and in the so-called 'global cities'. Similarly, Steven Kobrin (2002) advances territorialization as an attribute of globalization. Partnerships are also territorially defined, for instance, in the case of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China, most operate on the densely populated Chinese East Coast (see Chapter 6 and Chan 2009). Given the territoriality of globalization and shifts in governance, it is reasonable to expect that partnerships do not emerge evenly across the globe. Rather, some spaces make better environments for partnerships than others.

In Table 2.1, hypotheses are formulated regarding geographic patterns of emergence. The hypotheses are derived from the

assumptions of the theoretical perspectives discussed above. Admittedly, the deduction of hypotheses is not an accurate science; variations within a single theoretical perspective might lead to different hypotheses. The hypotheses were therefore partly informed by the available data in the GSDP and by the UNCSD (see the indicators column in the table).

Theoretical perspective	Hypotheses	Indicators
Functionalist institutionalism	Partnerships emerge in places where government capacity is low.	More partnerships emerge in Sub-Saharan Africa than in the BRIC countries.
Policy network theories	Partnerships emerge in places where organizational density is higher.	More partnerships emerge in South Africa and India, who were hosting the WSSD process.
New institutionalism	Partnerships are active in countries that are most embedded in international institutions.	More partnerships emerge in countries with high degrees of IO membership.

Table 2.1 Geographic patterns of emergence

2.2.1 Functionalist institutionalism

From functionalist institutionalism we derived the hypothesis that partnership governance emerges in places where government capacity is low or decreasing. We arrived at this hypothesis because functionalism assumes a rational emergence process: partnerships emerge to fill certain gaps in the governance process. While

acknowledging that government capacity is very hard to measure, we chose to compare two sets of partnerships, from the Sub-Saharan African region and from the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India and China). Since the BRIC countries have undergone high economic growth over the last decades we assume that governments have increased capacity through higher tax and trade revenues, but also through administrative reforms. We assume that slower development in Sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, leaves with relatively low revenues and few increased means for government reform. Therefore, we would expect the governance gap to be greater in Sub-Saharan Africa than in the BRIC countries; resulting in a major incentive and demand for partnerships.

Table 2.2 shows frequencies of the number of partnerships registered with the UNCSD by region and by geographic scope. Countries in the Sub-Saharan Africa region host 152 partnerships as countries of implementation, while the BRIC are countries of implementation for 117 partnerships. Considering the small number of BRIC countries, the fact that they host more than a third of all 344 partnerships is remarkable. Therefore, one cannot unequivocally observe that more partnerships emerge in regions where the governance gap is greater, for instance Sub-Saharan Africa. However, interpreting these figures is difficult, for instance, should one look at the number of countries or at the population that the countries represent? Yet, generated frequencies clearly indicate that partnerships are not overwhelmingly emerging where governance gaps are greater.

		Number of partnerships registered with the UNCSD					
		Global Scope	Regional Scope	SubReg. Scope	National Scope	Local Scope	Tot.
Countries of Implementation (Col)	Northern Africa	41	7	10	-	1	59
	Sub-Saharan Africa (ex. South Africa)	109 (87)	24 (22)	13 (13)	6 (5)	-	152 (127)
	Latin America & Caribbean (ex. Brazil)	99 (89)	9 (9)	19 (19)	3 (2)	2 (2)	132 (121)
	East Asia (ex. China)	45 (18)	13 (8)	4 (3)	1 (-)	-	63 (29)
	South Asia (ex. India)	67 (41)	14 (7)	2 (2)	1 (1)	1 (-)	85 (51)
	South-East Asia	67	27	12	2	-	108
	West Asia	30	3	7	1	-	41
	Oceania	15	6	18	1	-	40
	CIS (ex. Russia)	32 (19)	4 (2)	4 (4)	1 (1)	-	41 (26)
	Developed regions (ex. low/middle income countries)	121 (118)	32 (32)	37 (37)	2 (2)	1 (1)	193 (190)
	BRIC countries	87	18	8	3	1	117

Table 2.2 Geographic scope and partnerships per region

2.2.2 Policy network theories

Policy network theories assume that emergence of partnerships is more likely to occur in places where organizational density is higher. Since the set of partnerships we are looking at are part of one political process, we identified geographical nodes, where policy makers met to broker partnerships and to decide Partnerships for Sustainable Development as an official outcome, namely South Africa and Indonesia, hosts to the WSSD and its preparatory process. Consequently, we expect more partnerships in these countries compared to other countries in their respective regions. South Africa is a country of implementation for 84 Partnerships for Sustainable Development, corresponding to more than half (55 per cent) of all partnerships active in Sub-Saharan Africa. Without South Africa, the countries of this region would represent 25 fewer Partnerships for Sustainable Development (which equals to a drop of 16.4 per cent). South Africa is therefore clearly overrepresented as a country of implementation, even though other countries may have more urgent sustainable development needs. Indonesia is a country of implementation for 58 Partnerships for Sustainable Development, which means more than a half (54 per cent) of all partnerships in the South-East Asian region. 108 partnerships are implementing in South-East Asia, without Indonesia there would be 12 less (equaling to a drop of 11.1 per cent). Although the difference is less pronounced than in the case of South Africa, Indonesia is also clearly overrepresented in its region. This finding may relate to a higher organizational density during the WSSD and the preparatory process. We also point out, however, that because these countries were

playing hosts to the WSSD, their respective governments also had higher reputational stakes in the (apparent) success of the WSSD. Therefore, the emergence patterns may not only be a manifestation of international or transnational policy networks, but also of a political incentive to produce visible outcomes.

2.2.3 New institutionalism

New Institutionalism assumes organizational contexts that are more or less enabling for partnerships. In the case of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, international organizations play an important role as they promote policies and instruments and provide a steady flow of 'best practices'. Accordingly, we expected more partnerships in countries that are most connected, and have the highest number of memberships of international organizations (IO). An analysis, however, is complicated by an intervening variable, namely that the most connected countries tend to be developed countries that often assume a specific role as funding partners within partnerships. Therefore we apply the comparisons within the group of the most connected countries and within the group of countries with the lowest IO membership (figures 4.3 and 4.4, Sources: GSPD and CIA (2008))

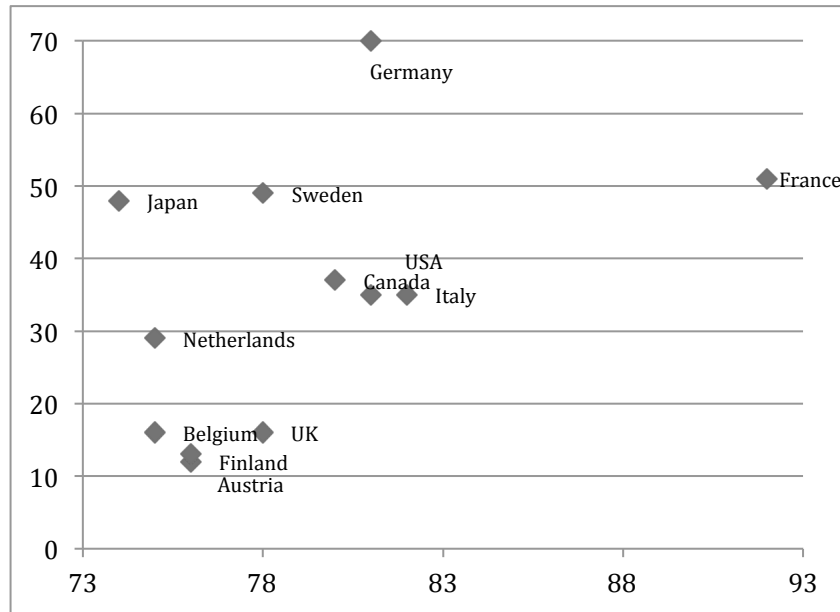


Figure 2.1 IO membership and no. of partnerships (most-connected countries)⁷

Among the most IO-connected countries, which also are the donor countries (see Figure 2.1), we observe no remarkable relation between IO membership and the number of partnerships they host or partake in.

⁷ X-axis title: number of international Organizations; Y-axis title: number of partnerships.

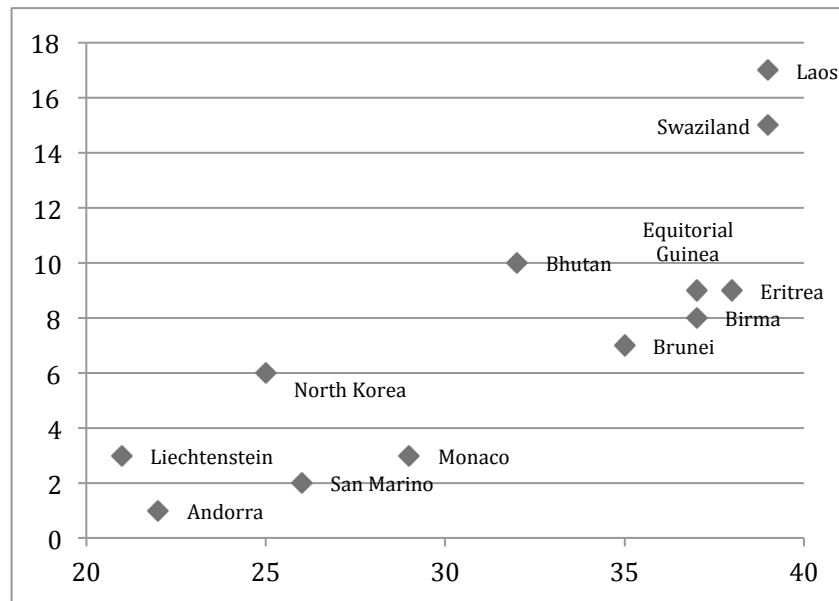


Figure 2.2 IO membership and no. of partnerships (least-connected countries)⁸

Among the least connected countries, however, we observe a marked tendency (see Figure 2.2). Higher IO membership seems to be a good indicator for higher involvement in partnerships as a country of implementation. It should be noted that most of the least connected countries also happen to be some of the smallest countries in the world. One should therefore be cautious to draw conclusions, there are more factors that might determine whether a country host many or few partnership activities. Nevertheless, the number of memberships of international organization seems to matter for the prevalence of partnerships in countries that have not yet reached a high degree of IO membership.

⁸ X-axis title: number of international Organizations; Y-axis title: number of partnerships.

2.3 Patterns of emergence: policy areas

The structure and feature of a particular policy area can affect the emergence of partnerships. Cutler et al. (1999) have, for instance, argued that a market structure encourages private governance. However, do markets provide a sufficient coordination mechanism for public goods? It has been argued that oligarchic market structures are more suitable for private and hybrid governance than markets with an indefinite number of players. The fewer players in a certain sector, the more visible they are for e.g. consumer organizations and NGOs to scrutinize and to pressure. Ronit and Schneider (1999, 262) suggest that “in general, an effective sanctioning system seems more manageable in small or federated organizations, where the visibility of each member is high”. Therefore, partnerships emerge in and across existing policy areas, but some policy areas are probably more suitable for partnerships than others.

When formulating hypotheses around policy area patterns of emergence of partnerships, we are confronted with the fact that policy areas are rarely fixed, often overlap and partnerships often cut across various areas. Neither could a systematic formulation of hypotheses on policy areas be found in current literature on partnerships. In the Table 2.3 some hypotheses regarding policy area patterns of emergence are formulated, along with indicators, by theoretical category. The discussed theories and derived hypotheses are not exhaustive, but they are useful to emphasize theoretical implications of policy area patterns of emergence.

Theoretical Perspectives	Hypotheses	Indicators
Functionalist institutionalism	Partnerships emerge in policy areas that are (deemed) most urgent.	More partnerships emerge in areas related to MDG priorities.
Policy network theories	Partnerships emerge in policy areas where organizational density is high.	More partnerships emerge within policy areas that are the focus of the UNCSD.
New Institutionalism	Partnerships emerge in policy areas that are most regulated.	More partnerships emerge in areas that are governed by international law.

Table 2.3 Policy area patterns of emergence

2.3.1 Functionalist institutionalism

From a functionalist perspective partnerships emerge in policy areas that are deemed most urgent. To test this functionalist hypothesis, we focus on the overarching theme of water. This theme contains a variety of issues with varying levels of perceived urgency. Partnerships could be expected to emerge in sub-themes that are considered more urgent. To determine the level of urgency, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) are used as indicators, since they reflect international policy priority setting. The MDG on water explicitly stresses the need for access to drinking water and sanitation. Moreover, water partnerships often relate to other MDG themes, such as poverty and health. Figure 4.6 shows frequencies of 48 partnerships within the water theme.

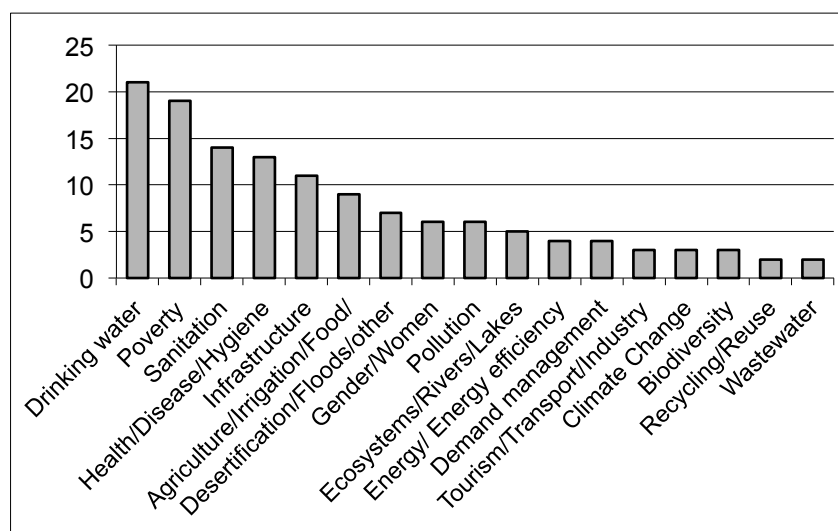


Figure 2.3 Water partnerships by function area

Most Partnerships for Sustainable Development emerge in MDG related topics and address drinking water, poverty and sanitation related issues (see Figure 2.1). This pattern seems to coincide with the hypothesis that more partnerships emerge in areas that are considered more urgent.

2.3.2 Policy network theories

According to policy network theories, partnerships emerge where organizational density is highest. For an empirical test of this assumption we focus on partnerships in policy areas which were featured in policy cycles of the UNCSD. The UNCSD works with a biannual focus on one or a few policy areas. In the preparation of these UNCSD meetings, many policy-makers, politicians and stakeholders gather. The density of potential partners may result in partnership agreements. We focus on partnerships with climate

change as a theme, looking at whether the number of climate-related partnerships increased after climate change was featured as the main theme of the UNCSD policy cycle, during which many potential partners in climate change gathered. **Error! Reference source not found.** shows that generally fewer partnerships have been registered over the years. The spike we observe in 2002 reflects the moment when registration was first opened for partnerships at the UNCSD. In the UNCSD-cycle-14/15 (in 2006-2007), climate change featured as the main thematic focus. In the first year of the cycle (2006), we observe a slight increase of the number of partnerships with climate change as a primary or secondary theme. But more interesting is the second year of the cycle (2008), when 11 per cent of the partnerships addressing climate change as primary theme were registered. In fact, half of the partnerships that registered in 2007 had climate change as a primary theme. Therefore, the increase of climate partnerships is considerable compared to other partnerships.

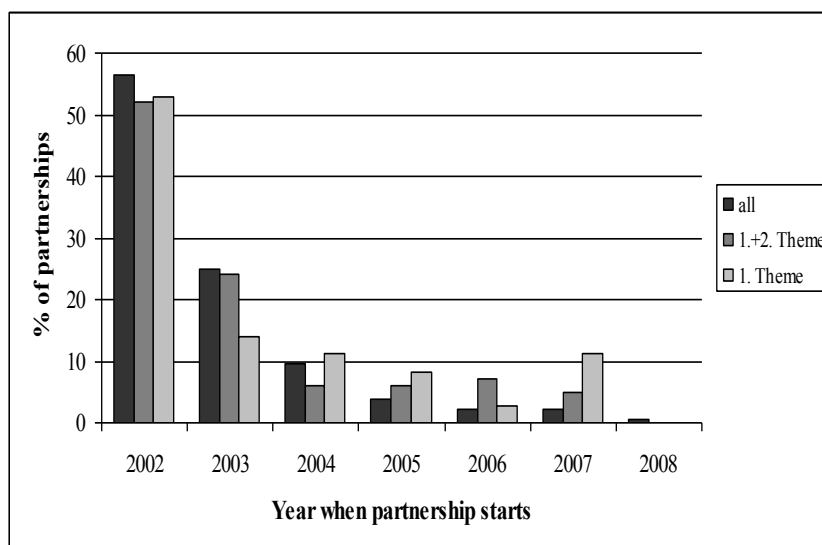


Figure 2.4 Partnerships with climate theme during and after the CSD climate policy cycle

We observe that when the UNCSD deals with a thematic area like climate change, partnerships in the same field are registered. This could be explained by the density of the climate policy makers and practitioners at a certain point in time. However, an alternative explanation could be that the Partnerships Team, the partnerships coordination and registration unit at the UNCSD, is actively looking for partnerships, inviting them to register when it fits the theme of the upcoming cycle⁹. Moreover, in other policy areas, the density of the network seems to matter less, for instance, the 2008-2009 cycle (UNCSD 16/17) dealt with agriculture, however, only two additional partnerships with agricultural themes were registered.

⁹ Interview with Patricia Chavez, officer at the UNCSD Partnerships Team, May 2008 UNHQ, New York

2.3.3 New institutionalism

New Institutionalism would suggest that partnerships are most likely to emerge in policy areas that are most regulated. This assumption is further supported by the notion of partnerships as implementation instruments, pertaining a better implementation of internationally agreed outcomes. Therefore, more partnerships are to be expected in areas that are governed by internationally agreed outcomes, in particular treaties. Figure 2.5 shows the distribution of partnerships across various policy areas.

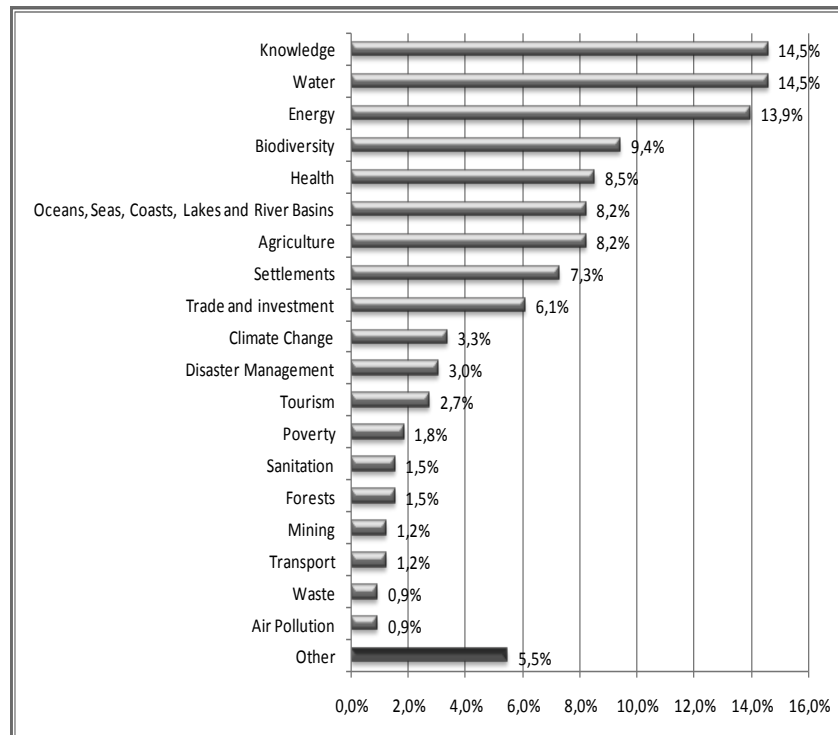


Figure 2.5 Distribution of partnerships across policy areas

Indeed, we find fewer partnerships in fields that are regulated domestically such as poverty reduction, sanitation, forests, mining,

and waste and air pollution. However, areas that are subject to international law, such as oceans and seas as well as trade and investment do not necessarily feature the highest number of partnerships, although still more than average.

2.4 Patterns of emergence: participation

A distinctive feature of partnerships is the participation of (non-state) actors. In contrast to the discussion about geographic scope and policy areas, the literature on participatory patterns of emergence of partnerships is abundant. Corporate Social Responsibility, New Public Management, and transnational advocacy network literature each provide distinct perspectives on why certain actors get involved in partnerships. In Corporate Social Responsibility literature, the reason for the emergence of partnerships lies with changed attitudes and behavior of business actors (Hartman and Stafford 1997, Hartman, Hofman, and Stafford 1999). Partnerships have increasingly become a corporative strategy (Juniper and Moore 2002). An early example of business initiated partnerships is from 1996, when the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) initiated the International Business Action on Climate Change campaign (see WBCSD 2001). Interestingly, most business actors involved in global partnerships concern big multinational companies. Indeed, the membership of the WBCSD consists solely of multinational corporations. This could give rise to the idea that highly visible business actors are more inclined to initiate partnerships, since they are under closer scrutiny by consumer associations and NGOs. New

Public Management (NPM) and similar perspectives (e.g. Hood 1991) explain the emergence of partnerships from the presumed inefficiency of traditional government and the alleged efficiency of the private sector. The conjuncture of economic liberalization, increasing complexity of public management and budget constraints, has pressured governments to acquire additional resources to effectively conduct policies. Public-private arrangements answer to this demand for more resources and higher implementation capacity. On a more critical note, public-private arrangement could also defer politically sensitive issues to mere management and coordination issues. The NPM perspective has especially taken off in the context of national governments, for example the New Right governments in the UK and the US in the 1980s. However, the perspective is also applied to the level of international relations and intergovernmental organizations (such as the UN) and supranational organizations (such as the EU). For instance, in the 1990s the UN suffered a severe lack of funding, partly attributable to payment arrears by the US. In an effort to revive and reinvigorate the organization, Secretary-General Kofi Annan sought alternative resources through partnerships (Zammit 2003).

The emergence of partnerships in global governance has also been attributed to the rise of transnational advocacy networks (Keck and Sikkink 1998, Hudson 2001). NGOs and other interested organizations become more accustomed to the language of business and international organizations. Moreover, some NGO representatives find business actors more responsive to their causes than traditional governments. In the context of the WSSD, one could

ask how much support the partnerships process really enjoyed from civil society actors. While some applauded Partnerships for Sustainable Development, others refused to take part in them (FOE 2003). The rift between advocates and opponents of partnerships may be pointing towards a division of labor in the non-profit sector. Moreover, the emergence of partnerships in countries with a restricted civil society, like China (see chapter 6-8), could suggest that the role of NGOs and other interest organizations in partnerships is actually more limited than often suggested in transnational advocacy literature. Observations in literature on Corporate Social Responsibility, New Public Management, and transnational advocacy networks are not necessarily tied to one of the theories discussed here. However, many commonalities can be found. For instance, New Public Management and Corporate Social Responsibility literature share some of the rationalist considerations of functionalist institutionalism. Table 2.4 suggests hypotheses and indicators regarding participatory patterns of emergence, without being exhaustive.

Theoretical perspectives	Hypotheses	Indicators
Functionalist institutionalism	Partnerships emerge to fill participatory gaps	Most partnerships involve increased business and NGO participation.
Policy network theories	Partnerships emerge in a context of transnational linking, they are initiated bottom-up by non-state actors	Partnerships are mostly led by civil society actors.

New Institutionalism	Partnerships mimic each other and are therefore similar in terms of organization.	Partnerships feature similar organizational types in terms of number of actors and divisions of tasks.
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Table 2.4 Participatory patterns of emergence

2.4.1 Functionalism

According to functionalists, partnerships answer to participatory shortcomings in intergovernmental processes. It is argued that non-state actors are underrepresented in sustainability governance, partnerships fill this gap by including business and civil society. Evidence from the GSPD shows considerable participation by non-state actors in the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. The average partnership consists of about six corporations or other for-profit organizations, and about seven scientific institutions or non-profit NGOs. These findings are consistent with the 2007-2008 findings (see Table 2.5, and p. 37-39), most experts rated partnerships as performing well or neutral at involving all relevant stakeholders.

	Frequency	Percentage
Good performance	60	47.2%
Neutral performance	44	34.6%
Bad performance	23	18.1%
Total	127	100%

Table 2.5 Performance of partnerships at involving relevant stakeholders

While the involvement of non-state actors seems substantial, their involvement as lead actors within partnerships is still lower than the involvement of states and international organizations such as the UN

(see Figure 2.6). While one could therefore argue that partnerships have engaged a large number of non-state actors, the initiative to broker and coordinate partnerships seems to remain largely in the hands of state actors.

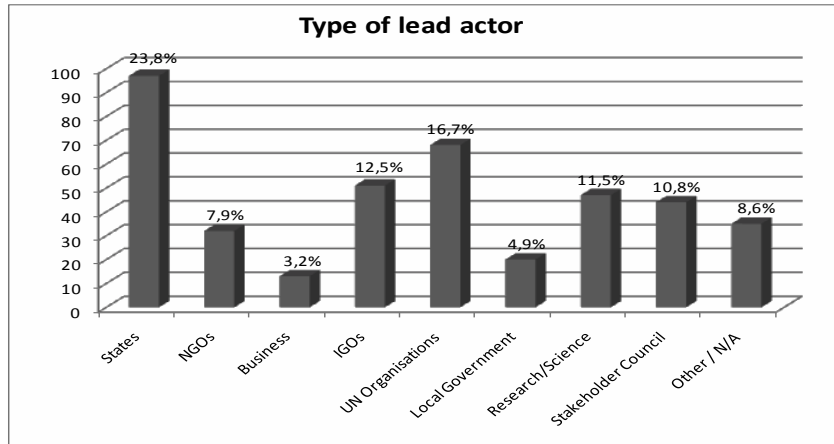


Figure 2.6 Type of lead actor

2.4.2 Policy network theories

Since partnerships, in participatory terms, are networks themselves, the question is not whether network theory is applicable, but which variant of network theory explains best. In this analysis, we looked at whether partnerships are a manifestation of a denser civil society. In other words, are partnerships mostly initiated by non-state actors? Findings point toward a different direction: less than one third of all Partnerships for Sustainable Development are led by civil society actors (NGOs, business partners, researchers/scientists and stakeholder) (see Figure 2.6). More are led by 'traditional' actors in international relations: states (23.8 per cent), UN organizations (16.7 per cent) and IGOs (12.5 per cent). While non-state actors play an important role, they do not seem to be the main initiators of

partnerships. Observed participatory patterns of emergence suggest that international organizations and state actors play a greater role in the emergence of partnerships than theories on transnational networks would suggest.

2.4.3 New institutionalism

New Institutionalism assumes that partnerships in the same policy process (like the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process) show similar characteristics, since certain partnership models are copied and referred to as 'best practice'. The institutional replication of partnerships is attractive, since it does not incur the cost of 'reinventing the wheel'. Replicated partnerships models may be found across different implementation contexts, even when they are not suited to these contexts. Partnerships share commonalities, even when these features may not be 'rational' at the level of the individual partnership. An indication for such institutionalist promulgation of partnerships would be the predomination of commonalities as opposed to institutional differences within the set of Partnerships for Sustainable Development analyzed in this dissertation.

Commonalities	Differences
The majority has a global geographic scope (48 per cent is not).	The regional coverage of partnership activities ranges from 1 to 200 countries of implementation.
Mostly partners from OECD-countries are donors, while partners in developing countries are receiving investments.	The size of partnerships varies considerably: the number of partners ranges from 1 to 514.
All registered Partnerships for Sustainable Development claim to implement aspects of international sustainable development.	The duration of partnership initiatives vary: some are pre-WSSD, some are open-ended, and others have not indicated any term.
	The types of membership vary: 37 per cent are closed, 3 per cent are open and 55.8 per cent are semi-open.
	The types of partners and lead actors vary.
	The internal organization varies greatly.
	Themes vary widely: there are more than 19 themes (+ 5 WEHAB-areas) that partnerships address.

Table 2.6 Institutional commonalities and differences

While Table 2.6 is not a comprehensive list of all possible institutional features of partnerships, there are observable differences with regard to internal organization, size, type and number of (leading) partners, type of membership, duration, and the number of countries of implementation they operate in. Subsequently, the new institutionalist hypothesis does not seem to be supported within our set of partnerships. In other words, there is not a clear best practice

model in the set that is replicated. However, it may be that more models are featured within the WSSD process. In some policy areas, like renewable energy, we observe that partnerships have become institutionally linked to one another. The Global Village Energy Partnership (GVEP) and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP), for instance, take joint initiatives and collaborate closely. This might indicate the development of meta-partnerships or at least a more institutionalized organizational field of partnerships.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted some implications of theoretical assumptions and examined patterns of emergence of partnerships. Additionally, considerable discrepancies between theoretical discussions and the actual patterns of emergence were observed, raising the question whether current theories sufficiently explain the emergence of partnerships.

In contrast to many functionalist institutional accounts, partnerships are not necessarily filling functional gaps in governance; they do not emerge in the geographic spaces where they are most needed. Policy network accounts go a long way in explaining the geographic dimension of emergence, as partnerships seem to emerge in countries that are relatively connected internationally (membership of international organizations), and as most partnership activities are found in urban, densely populated areas. Transnational advocacy network accounts do not seem to explain observed participatory

patterns in partnerships. While non-state actor representation is considerable, most partnerships are still led by traditional players in international relations. Some evidence for new institutionalism may be found in the fact that partnerships are often addressing issues that are already subject to international agreements. However, no prevailing organizational model is repeated throughout the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. One might say that – in terms of organizational arrangements – partnerships have reinvented the wheel repeatedly.

The diversity of theories reflects the current state of knowledge on the emergence of partnership arrangements: there is a lively theoretical discussion, but there is scarce empirical evidence pointing towards a specific theory. The sample of partnerships that have emerged around and after the 2002 WSSD provides a unique opportunity to understand patterns of emergence, as it represents a comparable and delimited set of partnerships belonging to the same political and institutional process. In the case of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, however, we found that none of the discussed institutionalist theories could fully account for observed patterns of emergence. One shortcoming of institutionalist theories is their narrow focus on partnerships as a separate institutional category. In fact, partnerships emerge in a heavily politically contested context. The fact that partnerships are overrepresented in South Africa and Indonesia cannot be seen apart from the fact that these countries were hosts of the WSSD process. The strong support from UN and other international organizations for partnerships is also clear from the fact that they feature often as lead partners.

Moreover, partnerships seem to follow international political priorities such as the MDGs. Therefore, a discussion of the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development cannot forgo political motivations (see Chapter 3).

3 The Politics of Partnerships for Sustainable Development¹⁰

3.1 Introduction

Partnerships for Sustainable Development have been negotiated, endorsed and implemented in a contested political arena, serving a multitude of political goals. While Partnerships for Sustainable Development explicitly refer to sustainable development objectives, they generate effects beyond their explicit goals. Only a part of these effects are intended. New political challenges may result from these implicit, unintended consequences. Partnerships, therefore, are not neutral implementation tools: they are employed in a political context, serve political goals and generate political challenges. Interviews with partnership experts from different sectors reveal that partnerships are predominantly understood as short-term projects aiming at the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, in which different sets of actors share risks and contribute their expertise. This common view of partnerships is difficult to support with factual evidence: 30 per cent of Partnerships for Sustainable Development have an undetermined duration or take the form of

¹⁰ This chapter is based on: Ayşem Mert and Chan, S. (2012) Politics of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, previously published as chapter 2 in: Philipp Pattberg, Biermann, F., Chan, S. and Mert, S. (2012) Public Private Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Emergence, Influence and Legitimacy. Edward Elgar. Cheltenham, UK

open-ended projects. Many do not focus on specific implementation goals. Most importantly, there is little evidence to suggest that risks are shared among partners. The lack of written protocols, contracts and memoranda of understanding among partners make accountability and risk-sharing particularly difficult. As instruments that bring partners together with different interests, goals, abilities and priorities, partnerships do not only represent collaborative arrangements, they also become a ground for competition over meanings, resources and ultimately hegemony. However, even if the process of building partnerships is flawed, or if partnerships themselves are ineffective, it does not mean that they do not exert influence. This chapter examines the political dimension of partnerships for sustainable development. The first section focuses on the process that resulted in partnerships as the official outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The second section looks into the political influence of partnerships at several levels of governance in the field of sustainable development. Finally, the third section examines the influence of specific partnerships on their respective issue areas.

3.2 Negotiation of partnerships

Partnerships for Sustainable Development were defined as “voluntary multi-stakeholder initiatives which contribute to the implementation of inter-governmental commitments” (Kara and Quarless 2002) in Agenda 21, as well as in the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and in the Johannesburg Plan

of Implementation (UNDESA 2002b). A set of guidelines, the so-called Bali Guiding Principles, were added, detailing what is meant by partnerships within the UN governance system. The definition of partnerships as voluntary implementation instruments and the Bali Guiding Principles were both settled in the preparatory process to the WSSD, during PrepComs II, III, and IV; they are the result of long consultation, negotiation and lobbying processes. These processes did not only involve delegates and UN representatives, but also non-state actors. The resulting conceptualization was a compromise; the guidelines were non-binding criteria that neither defined screening, monitoring or reporting procedures, nor was a central body designated to oversee the evolving partnerships regime. Nonetheless, partnerships became an official part of the United Nations environmental governance system as they were accepted as an official outcome of the WSSD, despite opposition from several major groups and country delegations. Although the term partnership belongs to the UN jargon since 1992, partnerships were only considered as official (type-2) outcomes of an intergovernmental process in the preparatory phase of the WSSD, because pressure to produce a concrete deliverable at the WSSD in Johannesburg was mounting.¹¹ Shortly after the WSSD organization bureau at the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) proposed partnerships as a possible outcome, “the US expressed appreciation for the non-binding Type II outcomes and

¹¹ The final decision of PrepCom IV mentions partnerships as ‘events’ to take place before the summit.

called for 'space' at the WSSD to allow for related dialogues" (IISD 2002, 11). The concept had earlier been developed by UNDESA, to increase NGO involvement. But most importantly, partnerships were meant to break through existing donor fatigue: "Every responsibility was being put at the feet of the governments. There was a strong push that this [responsibility to implement] should be shared."¹² UNDESA's intended format of a UN partnerships regime was very different from the end result. First and foremost, expectations about Type I and Type II outcomes as complementary processes changed:

"This was our [UNDESA's] concept of what would be the outcome of Johannesburg: a commitment among the governments to go forward within that intergovernmental framework, and the Type II outcome was to be the expressed, demonstrable commitment of donors and the wider community to help developing countries through a range of partnership initiatives, which would express the broader participatory approach to development support."¹³

According to this original intention, the commitment of donors and the international community to realize the Millennium Development Goals in developing countries would be assured, while intergovernmental agreements would continue to address new and more challenging issues. However, partnerships were not matched

¹² Interview with a DESA representative at the time of the WSSD, May 2007, New York.

¹³ Interview with a DESA representative at the time of the WSSD, May 2007, New York.

by a binding outcome, as governments failed to agree on most issues at the WSSD. In fact, partnerships was almost the only tangible outcome of the Johannesburg Summit. Secondly, the function of Type II outcomes was reduced to mere implementation, despite initial aims to conceptualize them as instruments to enhance participation in global sustainable development:

“[In the run up to the WSSD] we were talking about outcomes. An outcome needs not to be implementation, but it has been narrowly defined as implementation. Partnership was intended to be more of a coordinated and collective approach to provide development support. The question is how you define that development support. Unfortunately, because we were dealing with very specific concerns, we ended up attaching the guideline to an entity which became a project or program.”¹⁴

In sum, the initial conceptualization of Partnerships for Sustainable Development differed from the end result, owing to decisions made at the PrepComs about the concept of partnerships, the specific terms of the Bali Guidelines, and the negotiation results at the WSSD. During PrepCom III, the US and major group representatives of business and industry explicitly supported a vaguely defined partnerships process, which raised suspicions with both NGOs and

¹⁴ Interview with a DESA representative at the time of the WSSD, May 2007, New York.

developing countries. The first lines of contestation were drawn as a response to US support for partnerships:

“We had a meeting with the US delegation at PrepCom II, [in which] we lectured them on what it is and all kinds of activity would come out and we would be able to do things that would go beyond intergovernmentally made decisions. We must have done such a good job that they became champions of partnerships, which can backfire in this house because there are well set perceptions about the governments and their decisions. When the US overly supports something, everybody starts wondering why. [...] The minute the US government started talking close to the partnerships, the other parties suspicions expanded all of a sudden. In fact we had to go and tell them quietly not to do it anymore.”¹⁵

According to another respondent, US support for the partnerships process had opened a space for other countries to avoid binding decisions:

“[Partnerships are] another thing that kills any initiative [and are to be] seen as an opportunity to opt out of responsibility [...] [The United States was] the most visible advocate of these partnerships. The concern of the developing countries was that the States would not agree to [any binding

¹⁵ Interview with UN representative, May 2008, New York.

agreements]. And it was seen as opting out of responsibilities on both sides.”¹⁶

In other words, US support for partnerships at PrepCom III had signaled to developing countries that the US would either not agree to new multilateral environmental agreements or fail to ratify them, as it had been the case with other conventions. Hence, developing countries re-focused their strategies to avoid potential loss that could result from the adoption of partnerships as Type II outcomes, both in terms of loss in Official Development Assistance (ODA) and in terms of loss in autonomy in environmental decision-making. According to a Southern country delegate,

“[When] the secretariat released a paper introducing the concept of Type I and Type II [outcomes], the developing countries had the biggest concern, because they felt that this is going to bypass binding obligations of states and that this was a way to channel money outside of governments. [...] Instead of money flowing bilaterally or multilaterally it would be easier for [the donors] to pick a project and bypass the government. Because in some cases the players in the partnerships were other NGOs. If you look at the US partnership in the Congo Basin, the Forest Partnership, it basically bypasses all the governments; [the money] goes straight to WWF. This is against what has been done for years in funding conservation. There never was [this way of

¹⁶ Interview with DESA representative, May 2007, New York.

funding of] US-based NGOs, US-based consultancies. So there was a big concern that this was going to happen through partnerships.”¹⁷

Additional suspicion was raised when the broad business support for partnerships became evident. According to Diane Quarless, the chairperson of the partnership negotiations at PrepCom IV,

“Business was absolutely supportive. [...] Here was an opportunity for particularly large business actors. There is a tremendous cache attached to the UN’s acknowledgement. At the time [...] there was a developing country knocking heads with a big oil multinational. G77’s concern was that [this could] whitewash them: You give these companies the UN stamp, a green stamp of approval of CSR. The MNCs have done [much environmental damage], and now they will be absolved of these crimes by virtue of partnerships. There were those among the developing countries that were feeling very strongly about this.”¹⁸

All respondents from within the organizing committee, ECOSOC and UNDESA agree that the concerns of the South were being forcefully expressed, draining the enthusiasm (particularly from business actors). In addition to the bypassing of governments by substituting ODA, resistance was building on two issues:

¹⁷ Interview with Southern country delegate to the UNCSD and the WSSD, December 2006, Denpasar.

¹⁸ Interview with Diane Quarless, June 2007, New York.

The Politics of Partnerships for Sustainable Development

“That the secretariat was taking the responsibility over from those who are responsible, which usually means the industrialized countries, and [...] loading it on to major groups. [The other was that] we were making it easier for UNCSD not to make more heart breaking decisions because [delegations] could easily have said “we have a partnership on this, we don’t need to decide.”¹⁹

In a similar vein, EU delegations and environmental NGOs were worried that partnerships could become an instrument to repudiate international environmental agreements. Another concern of the NGO community was the increasing business involvement in the UN, and the green-/blue-washing of invasive corporate activities. Finally, a further and largely unforeseen concern also surfaced during the PrepComs III and IV, once again frustrating the organizing committee’s initial formulation of partnerships: delegations from the South had started to perceive partnerships as a threat to their sovereignty. Developing country delegations (China, Indonesia, and Malaysia were specifically mentioned), had become increasingly worried about the possibility that developmental projects within their national borders would pick and choose which international or national NGOs to work with. As a result, some delegations raised questions about non-state actor participation, and China went even as far as to delineate which NGOs were acceptable and which were not. The framework that was negotiated at PrepCom IV was meant to

¹⁹ Interview with Southern country delegate to the UNCSD and the WSSD, December 2006, Denpasar.

address various governmental concerns in order to make partnerships an agreeable outcome to all parties involved. However, the negotiation process was long and cumbersome. According to Diane Quarless, co-chair of that meeting, one of the reasons for this frustration had been the alienation of business from the process:

“All of these big corporations [had] an interest in CSR; therefore the process had to be selective. So the idea was first to make the corporations to sign the CSR code of conduct through the process of registration. That, I think, was the principle reason for the draining of the enthusiasm from the private sector. These [concerns] leading up to the Bali Guidelines killed the initiative. Bali was critical, the enthusiasm that has been built evaporated.”²⁰

Another reason was that the concerns of developing countries slowed down the process resulting in a loss of momentum. Jan Pronk argued that the idea of an inclusive process within the UN was frustrating because the guidelines were particularly discouraging new and big initiatives to be effectively created in the short-term.²¹ Diane Quarless agreed that the negotiations took too long:

“It all changed at Bali. That’s where [the initiative] was killed ... we have taken so long to reach an agreement on [...] the

²⁰ Interview with Diane Quarless, June 2007, New York.

²¹ Interview with Jan Pronk, 21 April 2008, The Hague.

Bali Guidelines, [which] were supposed to be the basis on which you form a partnership.”²²

The resulting document, the Bali Guiding Principles (or the Bali Guidelines) (UN 2002a)b, forms the framework that guides the arrangement and registration of partnerships with the UNCSO. While respondents from partnerships often thought they were ambiguous, UN representatives and governance experts often regarded them as a failure, for several reasons. Part of the critique concerned the way in which the issues above were addressed. Another part concerned the content of the Guidelines: what they invoked and what they left out. Although the Bali Guidelines reflected the concerns of several parties, the final document did not effectively address them. For instance, one guideline defines partnership objectives, clarifying that partnerships were only to contribute to the implementation of intergovernmental decisions, implying that newly emerging issues on the environmental agenda would not be tackled through partnerships. In a later study, Gunningham (2007) noted that partnerships are most effective and influential in newly emerging issue areas. But without an institutional body to initiate or invite partnerships on these new issues and under the condition that partnerships can only address issues with intergovernmental consensus, this was not possible in practice.

Negotiations also concentrated on the inclusion of business actors into the decision making process. Two criteria were proposed: a code

²² Interview with Diane Quarless, June 2007, New York.

of conduct to be signed by all corporate actors involved, and a strict commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Both of these proposals were ultimately turned down. Regarding the involvement of NGOs, some delegations agreed to type-2 outcomes only if they had the chance to approve the list of all NGOs from their country that could be partners. According to a respondent from the organizing committee²³, although partnerships were “not sufficiently significant to raise havoc”, if any southern government wished to nullify the registration of a partnership, they could. This was because the only partnerships that were actually negotiated and agreed upon would be those registered during the WSSD, in other words, what was agreed upon was not a process but a list of partnerships at a certain point in time. Moreover, conceptualizing partnerships as implementation mechanisms as opposed to decision making mechanisms or means to ensure participation of non-state actors remedied some concerns. The outcome was that partnerships were no longer envisaged as an instrument to increase intersectoral and multi-stakeholder participation, but rather a straight-forward implementation tool.

The Bali Guidelines were, however, successful in framing an ideal-type of partnerships, even when they did not provide the mandate to reach this ideal. For example, it was highlighted that partnerships should address economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development both in their design and in their implementation activities. This very broad scope of issues accounts

²³ Interview with UN representative, May 2008, New York.

for a rather ambitious framing if one considers that partnerships are mere implementation mechanisms that could not go beyond inter-governmental decisions. The broad scope of issues to be addressed has been one of the reasons why in the partnerships registry partnerships are asked to list multiple aims and functions in the social, economic and ecological spheres. While most partnerships reported functions across such a wide issue area, they did not have the means to fulfill all of those promises, resulting in partnerships that only elusively relate to the environmental aspect of poverty reduction or vice versa. While addressing the three pillars of sustainable development, partnerships should also fit into the sustainable development strategies and poverty reduction strategies of the countries, regions and communities where implementation takes place. This statement assumes that appropriate strategies are in place and operational in countries of implementation. On this account, partnerships are not supposed to lead to significant political changes and reform, or to move beyond the existing frames of reference. While it was stated in the Bali Guidelines that partnerships should be multi-stakeholder initiatives with equal say among partners in the design and management of projects, they should “preferably involve a range of significant actors in a given area of work” (UN 2002a). In other words, partnerships potentially reassert existing power imbalances by only involving actors that are already seen as significant in a given issue area. This is in particular relevant for local communities on the recipient side. Introducing new technologies, governance schemes, or ways of living into communities is often accompanied by hegemonic relations that can

be further exacerbated. Another guideline that contradicts the intended empowerment of the recipient communities suggests that “while the active involvement of local communities in the design and implementation of partnerships is strongly encouraged (bottom-up approach), partnerships should be international in their impact” (UN 2002a), which allows for the empowerment of transnational and international instead of local actors. While the guidelines suggest that all partners should be involved in the design of the partnerships, they also advised that “as partnerships evolve, there should be an opportunity for additional partners to join on an equal basis” (UN 2002a).

Another set of problems regarding the content of the Bali Guidelines arises from what was not explicitly outlined. While partnerships should be voluntary, self-organizing, transparent and accountable, the Guidelines did not stipulate any screening or monitoring mechanisms to ensure these qualities. Instead, partnerships should prove to be transparent and accountable by self-reporting. Moreover, the Bali Guidelines refer to the need for identifying funding resources, formulating tangible goals and specifying clear timeframes. However, the Guidelines do not explicate on how to fulfill these needs. According to Quarless:

“There were lengthy discussions within the bureau as to how we were going to monitor these partnerships. [In the two-year UNCSD cycle] there was supposed to be one year where we would do nothing more than reviewing these partnerships. [...] That has not happened. [In the end], we got

the lowest common denominator, which has broken my heart, really. Because what they said is that ‘we do not want DESA to take a leadership role in conceptualizing partnerships’”.²⁴

Neither UNDESA nor the UNCSD were given authority to effectively review and monitor partnerships. The UNCSD’s authority was limited to screening and selection at a very minimal level. Despite all the contradictions above, the Bali Guidelines could have had significant effects, had there been a central partnerships body in place overseeing the reviewing and the monitoring of partnerships. With a stronger UNCSD mandate, a more balanced focus on different issue areas, an even geographical distribution, and balanced multi-stakeholder participation in partnerships could have emerged. Furthermore, if there had been binding rules, the UNCSD could have better maintained the qualities of partnerships as an instrument for sustainable development. The ideal-type partnership sketched in the guidelines may have been practically impossible for every partnership to achieve, yet ideals would still be better reflected in the partnerships regime. Unfortunately, as non-binding principles, the Guidelines mostly reflected disagreement among parties than anything else.

In sum, the Bali Guidelines consisted of conflicting suggestions regarding the role, function and nature of partnerships; while warning about potential negative effects, they failed to address and

²⁴ Interview with Diane Quarless, June 2007, New York.

avoid them. While framing partnerships in an ideal form, they simultaneously restricted partnerships to evolve towards such a limited ideal. Most importantly, the partnerships process remained non-binding and it was not accompanied by a monitoring mechanism, resulting in a weak screening process for registration.

3.3 Governance through partnerships

In the previous section we noted that there is a discrepancy between the ideal of partnerships and the partnerships regime as an outcome of the WSSD. This gap widened as some established stakeholders in international negotiations sought to tune down the potential of a future partnerships regime. At the same time, ambitions for binding rules on partnerships registration were watered down in the process, leaving a rather weakly defined process. However, many scholars (e.g. Witte, Streck, and Benner 2003a) and interviewees in our survey agreed on the great potential of partnerships in sustainable development governance. That is, had they been well defined, accompanied by strict requirements with regards to e.g. Corporate Social Responsibility, and if there were a monitoring process in place, partnerships potentially could have been a more effective instrument to achieve sustainable development. This assumption is difficult to put to test, since it concerns a hypothetical situation. Yet, the question of how partnerships impact on the institutional and political environment of sustainable development remains relevant: an individual partnership or a group of partnerships can still significantly impact a policy field, at different levels of governance. In the

following sections, we discuss the extent to which partnerships change established political configurations at different levels of governance, in particular at the UN level, the domestic level, and the level of the partnerships regime.

3.3.1 Partnerships in the UN system

Despite the weak partnerships regime defined at the UN level, partnerships have had a significant effect on the workings of the UN. The emergence of partnerships as official governance mechanisms within the UN is a manifestation of a discursive shift in governance, but it is also instrumental to a closer association between the UN and business (Zammit 2003). Since the WSSD, the annual meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development have since (often) been accompanied by 'Partnership Fairs'. According to the UN, these fairs provide "a venue for Partnerships for Sustainable Development to network, identify partners, create synergies between partnerships and learn from each other's experiences"(UNDESA 2002a). The fairs aim to support partnerships and build capacities, but also to broker more partnerships. However, no new partnerships have actually been announced at or during these meetings. Moreover, registration seems to be slowing down: in 2009, only two new partnerships were registered, and none were registered in 2010. Therefore, in terms of building partnerships, the process appears rather unsuccessful. Yet, Partnership Fairs also provide the opportunity for NGOs and business to enter the UN venue during the UNCSD meetings, as country delegation meet and discuss selected themes of sustainability politics. Therefore, rather than building new partnerships,

representatives of partnerships aim to reach officials and delegates to the UNCSD. The partnerships regime has the effect of opening political space for a closer association between the UN, NGOs and business. This does not lead to new partnerships or increased governance without government (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992, Peters and Pierre 1998). Rather, it confirms the position of the UNCSD as an intergovernmental body that is relatively open to third parties to influence, but not to directly partake in decision making. This has also been observed by Witte and colleagues (2003); the UN and other international organizations do not have a coherent policy to embed or mainstream partnerships in their operations, even when partnerships have been discussed in the broader context of Global Public Policy Networks (Reinicke 1998), and international organizations have widely adopted a discourse that prefers partnerships.

3.3.2 Partnerships and the domestic level

One impact that partnerships have at the domestic level of governance is that they can be instrumental in the strengthening of nongovernmental actors in public service and goods provision vis-à-vis the state. It has been argued that, especially in developing countries, business has taken over many government tasks, sometimes in the form of business-government or business-NGO partnerships. Idemudia (2008), for instance, discusses the role of multinational oil companies engaging in development in the Niger Delta through various types of partnerships. He observes that community investments driven by business logic results in an uneven

distribution of social infrastructure, for example in the field of tap water provision. The strengthening of business interests through partnerships has led to a broader claim that partnerships are a vehicle in the further expansion of neoliberalism. Faranak Miraftab (2004a) argues that partnerships often end up reinstating or even reinvigorating for-profit interests. While partnerships are set up to service the poor, they are used to break down state responsibility for equitable development. After a partnership ends its activities, the state has faded away and instead of promised power sharing, the poor end up with even graver dispossession. Therefore, Miraftab compares partnerships to a Trojan horse: presented as a gift, they actually break down state responsibility and capability for equitable development, and, as a result, reinstate private and corporate interests (c.f. Van der Wel 2004).

On the other hand, some scholars associate partnerships with reforms in political institutions and policies, seeing them as a tool for democratization. Bäckstrand (2006a, 467) finds that “deliberative stakeholder practices with general democratic potential” are exemplified in global sustainability governance, in particular in the process surrounding the WSSD. Similar reform is observed at the local and domestic level (e.g. Johnson and Wilson 2000, Barret and Usui 2002). However, in the sample of partnerships registered with the UNCSD, only few are explicitly concerned with promoting democratic practices and practices of good governance. An exception is the Good Governance in Sustainable Development partnership (GGSD), which explicitly aims at assisting societies “to develop effective government within a democratic system, and to implement

sustainable development principles through global partnership” (UN 2006a, accessed 16 March 2011) through local city networks. At the same time, GGSD sets its own limits to influence democratization processes, as it departs from a minimal basic assumption that “the country [where the partnership implements its activities] must politically practice a democratic system”(UN 2006a, accessed 16 March 2011). Another exception is the Partnership for the Promotion of Sustainable Development in the Lake Victoria Basin, which also refers to democratic governance as a goal, although it does not explicitly refer to government reform. Whether the work of these partnerships has actually led to more (deliberative) democracy remains to be investigated, since both have not reported back to the UNCSD. The only partnership that has claimed achieving more democratic governance is Partners for Water and Sanitation (PAWS), which declares it facilitated “the development of more inclusive, democratic and adaptive governance processes for water management involving historically disadvantaged communities”(UN 2006a, accessed 16 March 2011) in South Africa. Of course, a partnership does not need to influence policy processes at a level and a scale where it can claim democratic change. Some partnerships will seek to strengthen civil society or business vis-à-vis ‘old government’. For instance, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership (CEPF) seeks to strengthen civil society in local biodiversity governance, by implementing grant programs to support local NGOs’ biodiversity conservation activities

In some cases partnerships even question the sovereignty of existing government entities. The CEPF, again, represents an interesting case

because it defines 'biodiversity hotspots' as implementation areas, rather than countries or areas within countries (see Chapter 8). For instance the 'Western Ghats' biodiversity hotspot encompasses both areas in India and Sri Lanka, and the 'Indo-Burma' hotspot encompasses even five countries: Cambodia, Lao P.D.R., Thailand and Vietnam, as well as Hainan Island and parts of southern China. Theoretically, such transregional initiatives have far-reaching implications with regards to political organization.

3.3.3 The organizational field of partnerships

While the number of Partnerships for Sustainable Development registered with the UNCSA hardly increases, outside of the UNCSA, partnerships are continuously brokered. As the number of partnerships grows, they increasingly interact, collaborate, and sometimes even create new partnerships. Among partnerships, a certain politics is therefore also evolving. Partnerships can exist in isolation from each other, but more likely – when they are active in the same geographical and issue area – they adopt political strategies. For instance, partnerships may compete for dominance, or partnerships adopt collaborative strategies. Among Partnerships for Sustainable Development, energy partnerships seem to be at the forefront of inter-partnership collaborations. For example, the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN 21) and the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP) are both partners and founders of a search engine for renewable energy and energy efficiency. Another example of a collaborative strategy among partnerships is memorandums of understanding for instance

between the Global Village Energy Partnership (GVEP), The Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD) and REEEP. On the other hand, it is reasonable to expect that competitive strategies among partnerships will also become more common; following the example in private rule-making, where standard setting and labeling have at times been negatively affected by competition. One of the most significant examples of this development is visible in the field of sustainable forestry. The Forest Stewardship Council, successful at gaining considerable recognition by various actors across various sectors, soon found itself competing against alternative forest certification schemes (such as, the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes [PEFC]) leading to considerable fragmentation in the field of private rule-making in sustainable forestry (Chan and Pattberg 2008).

3.4 Introduction of controversial technologies and institutions

In this section we look at the political use of partnerships in several issue areas. Due to the lack of a strict screening and follow-up process, partnerships create a platform for highly controversial technologies to gain recognition at the UN level (e.g. nuclear energy, biotechnologies, biofuels, and PVC and vinyl partnerships). In this section we present cases where partnerships are employed as a tool to relate politically controversial sectors and contexts.

3.4.1 Global Initiative Towards a Sustainable Iraq

The flexible nature of partnerships and the lack of criteria for formation and registration of Partnerships for Sustainable Development make them particularly prone to reflect the preferences of powerful actors in the politics of sustainable development. An example is the Global Initiative towards a Sustainable Iraq (GITSI). GITSI is an initiative launched at the UN Headquarters in May 2008 by Sustainable Development International and the United Nations Development Programme; its partners are local governments in Iraq, a number of stakeholders from the Gulf region, and the United States government. GITSI's information page on the UNCSO website indicates that its aim is to

“improve knowledge and awareness of the Iraqi society about sustainable development for the sake of achieving a sustainable Iraq so as to have a sustainable, stable and prosperous Iraq where all present and future generations can live in peace and harmony with other nations and where all resources are utilized in a sustainable manner catering to the well-being of Iraq's current and future generations and ecosystems.” (UN 2006a, accessed 5 March 2009)

GITSI's goals appear rather lofty, even though the causality established here can be challenged: improving knowledge of sustainability does not necessarily result in or even contribute to a country's stability, prosperity, peace and harmony. It could be argued that US occupation (supported by the very regional governments that

gained considerable power *vis-à-vis* the central government) has not contributed to stability, and not to the peace and harmony or the sustainability of Iraq. Moreover, GITSI aims to achieve this goal mainly by capacity building, technology transfer, raising awareness and subcontracting, some of the main strategies of US development aid in the past two decades. This raises the question how development aid relates to US hegemony, and in this case what the consequences and the intentions are of a partnership like GITSI. A USAID text on its website is a telling example of the linking of development with a wider political reform agenda:

“The United States has a long history of extending a helping hand to those people overseas struggling to make a better life, recover from a disaster or striving to live in a free and democratic country. It is this caring that stands as a hallmark of the United States around the world [...] and shows the world our true character as a nation. US foreign assistance has always had the twofold purpose of furthering America's foreign policy interests in expanding democracy and free markets while improving the lives of the citizens of the developing world (USAID).” (USAID 2011, accessed 10 October 2012)

In sum, GITSI's aim cannot be seen apart from a wider political agenda. GITSI is aiming at the necessary institutions, human and economic resources, technological means and public opinion for

Iraq's modernization towards a political system that is fully integrated into existing global power constellations.

3.4.2 Nuclear energy

At the UNCSD-15 meeting held in New York in May 2007, some of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development had their stands at the Partnerships Fair, an exhibition to showcase success in partnership projects. The last two partnerships registered to the UNCSD before the meeting also participated in this fair: Generation IV International Forum (GIF) and World Nuclear University (WNU), both promoting different aspects of nuclear energy. Until 2007, the UNCSD did not have any nuclear energy partnerships in its portfolio. However, UNCSD-15 was particularly about energy in the context of sustainable development, and the Partnerships Team's call for new registries has caught the attention of these initiatives. Generation IV refers to the latest generation of nuclear power plants and advocates their safety advantages compared to earlier technologies. The WNU focuses on educating nuclear engineers while simultaneously "correcting the misunderstandings [of the public] regarding nuclear energy"²⁵. To this end, the WNU organized a high profile side-event at the UNCSD, titled "The Contribution of Nuclear Energy to Sustainable Development", advocating the use of nuclear energy for the cause of sustainable development. While two speakers focused their presentations on the ways in which nuclear energy could be publicized, the opening speech of Susan Eisenhower was distinctly

²⁵ Transcribed from the presentations made at the Side Event at the UNCSD-15, 1 May 2007.

politically motivated. She claimed that under the pressures of climate change nuclear energy was under review again, since

“it has been and will continue to be the largest source of emission-free energy. [...] Nuclear energy is the only source of energy that can provide consistent and substantial levels of energy while reducing... [correction:] while producing emission-free”²⁶.

Eisenhower’s correction was important, as nuclear power plants were not reducing carbon emissions – in fact, they did not even result in the reduction of overall carbon emissions of the United States, which according to her, were “responsible for half of the total voluntary reductions in greenhouse gas emissions reported by US companies in 2001”²⁷. The voluntary reductions and the voluntary reporting scheme aside, in 2001 (and during all the years since then) there has been no reduction in carbon emissions of the US. Secondly, she was employing the term emission-free, which can be questioned from a technical point of view, as electricity production through nuclear power plants results in water vapor emissions, if not carbon. But most importantly, Eisenhower was introducing nuclear technologies as a sustainable and environmentally friendly source of energy at the UN Headquarters, when there is no agreement on the status of nuclear energy and sustainable development. Eisenhower’s

²⁶ Transcribed from the presentations made at the Side Event at the UNCSD-15, 1 May 2007.

²⁷ Transcribed from the presentations made at the Side Event at the UNCSD-15, 1 May 2007.

argument was based on three points. First, that nuclear energy production is safe especially compared to other security and environment concerns:

“You have to live near a nuclear power plant for over two thousand years to get the same amount of radiation that you get at a standard medical x-ray. So I challenge everyone here to look into the facts about this, because there are too many other issues on the table that threaten our long term security that could be addressed by nuclear energy”²⁸.

Second, solving climate change nuclear energy production would also be the solution to proliferation problems:

“I know we’re talking about sustainable development but everybody has to be deeply concerned about those developing nations and the potential of their access to nuclear technologies that may, as we discuss in Washington and elsewhere, lead to proliferation concerns. Rather ironically, I may be one of these security experts who feel very strongly that we will not be able to address proliferation problems without nuclear energy. Few people realize here today that 20 per cent of the nuclear energy that is generated in this country comes from Soviet era war heads that have been blended for reactor use. [...] I myself have been in and out of these nuclear weapons facilities and I can

²⁸ Transcribed from the presentations made at the Side Event at the UNCSD-15, 1 May 2007.

tell you I know something about the disposition of nuclear materials. We have a perfect storm, a perfect opportunity to be able to use excess nuclear materials and to make them appropriate for reactor use thus solving some of the deep concerns we have about the misuse of nuclear materials [...].”²⁹

In the heart of her vision about nuclear energy was her grandfather President Dwight Eisenhower’s Atoms for Peace Program, which not only suggested peaceful use of nuclear technologies through the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) but also sharing nuclear technologies (but not necessarily weapons) with the developing countries, some of which later on refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. In the context of the WNU, this vision of “peaceful and sustainable use of nuclear technologies” was supported by other important figures such as John Ritch (director general of World Nuclear Association), James Lovelock (author of the Gaia Theory), Hans Blix (IAEA director general-emeritus), Mohamed El-Baradei (director general of IAEA and Nobel Peace Prize laureate), Sir David King (chief science advisor to the government of the United Kingdom), and representatives of the nuclear energy industry. At the inaugural ceremony of the WNU, Blix (2003) was pointing out the security threats of climate change, proposing a transition from Atoms for Peace to Atoms for Sustainable Development, while El-Baradei (2003) was suggesting the necessity of nuclear power for

²⁹ Transcribed from the presentations made in the Side Event at the UNCSD-15, 1 May 2007.

development. Lovelock too emphasized that climate change made nuclear energy indispensable, and that “it is a foolish fantasy to think that we could [produce sufficient renewable energy] soon enough to avoid risking a greenhouse catastrophe” (Lovelock 2003). Finally, Geoffrey Ballard, the CEO of General Hydrogen was linking all concerns into one, in a way framing the reasoning behind the “nuclear renaissance”: As economic progress increased per capita energy consumption, and since all other forms of social progress was dependent on this,

“For society to continue its progress in medicine, social responsibility, science, education and quality of life, we must assure that there is an ever increasing supply of energy per capita. With human populations still on the rise, progress will not be sustained if we attempt to further reduce, or even stabilize, our energy production by reducing the emissions of the current energy source mix. We must increase our supply of energy, not reduce it.”(Ballard 2003)

It is important to note how the discourse around clean energy production is increasingly being subdued to concerns over climate change. Both GIF and WNU regard climate change and sustainable energy production as their primary goals and argue that nuclear energy production is sustainable on the basis that it is free of carbon emissions. While the GIF maintains that the partnership contributes to the implementation of Agenda 21 by protecting the atmosphere, the WNU states its mission as “increasing use of nuclear power as the

one proven technology able to produce clean energy on a large, global scale” (UN 2006a, accessed 10 October 2012), it also refers to contributing to Agenda 21 by protecting the atmosphere, the quality and supply of freshwater resources, and the transfer of environmentally sound technology, while contributing to science for sustainable development (UN 2006a, accessed 10 October 2012).

While the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol do not recognize nuclear energy as a suitable and sustainable way of mitigating climate change, lack of screening and monitoring of Partnerships for Sustainable Development allows for a controversial technology to gain recognition in the United Nations circles, by reducing sustainable development to climate change, and climate change to carbon emissions. Political moves of the WNU not only include the linking of security and environmental issues, but also the reduction of sustainability to low emission energy production. Another result is that other issues on the UNCSD agenda, such as changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, end up being subjugated to doubtful techno-fixes suggested to remedy climate change. The more general implications of this discursive shift has been noted in a BBC opinion article by O’Hara (2007), who argued that focusing merely on reducing carbon emissions was setting aside the common cause of many other problems, simply put, unsustainable lifestyles.

3.4.3 Biotechnology

In his study of biotechnology partnerships, Shuji Hisano (2005) lists some of the major problems with biotechnology partnerships. For

instance, although the official goal of many biotech partnerships is poverty alleviation, they focus on economically interesting products, which are mostly grown by large and medium scale farmers. Similarly, genetic engineering technologies donated by corporations were not developed to cope with the viruses that caused the most pressing problems for farmers. Moreover, the stated aim of the same partnership could vary from one media channel or platform to the other, raising questions about the beneficiaries of the projects: while in some platforms the partnership would be profiled as a development aid project, on another one its aim would be stated as negotiating sales rights.

The Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research Centres (CGIAR) that Hisano studied are among the Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Their partners are also involved in other partnerships and projects under the UNCSO. One of the specified aims of the CGIAR is to improve dialogue among stakeholders from the private sector and civil society on the issues regarding biotechnology and genetically modified agricultural production. According to various NGO representatives, the process resulted in the sidelining of alternative viewpoints prevalent in the civil society and in a deeper engagement of the Centres with the private sector. On the other hand, in partnerships between CGIAR and the private sector, the technologies and propriety genes were mostly provided free of charge by corporations. This closely resembles the spread of nuclear technologies when they were made freely available to recipient countries by the US government through the Atoms for Peace Program. With or without developmental or humanitarian

aims, the projects subscribe to the spread of genetic modification technologies to the recipient countries. The partnerships neither give voice to any of the opposition or critique from the users of these products (farmers and consumers alike), nor do they acknowledge the importance of traditional ways of agriculture as opposed to the cultivation of crops that require chemicals, insecticides and other kinds of inputs. Similarly, Eric Deibel (2009) suggests that public-private partnerships between corporations and research networks of biotechnology working under humanitarian licenses limit the possibilities for alternative ways of economic and scientific organization. Most visibly, they reproduce existing hierarchies that exclude small-scale and/or poor farmers. More subtly, by giving away a technology it is also acknowledged that the technology is privately owned by the donor, even when ownership is a sometimes highly contested, especially in some of the beneficiary countries. Such a combination of ownership and technology transfer with humanitarian aims could undermine the potential of alternatives, for example alternatives that explicitly support individuals that chose to live and work with genetic materials (Deibel 2009).

3.4.4 PVC

According to Greenpeace International website, “the production of PVC creates and releases one of the most toxic chemicals – dioxin ” (Greenpeace International 2008). Greenpeace International has been campaigning with considerable success against PVCs, contributing to their restriction (and complete ban in children toys) in northern Europe as well as in the products of corporations such as Nike, IKEA

and The Body Shop. It could be argued that the success of their campaign is a result of their focus on the production, as opposed to consumption or waste management aspects. Dioxin is emitted in the production and incineration process of PVC products. Its dissemination through the atmosphere results in their large-scale consumption, while accumulation in the food chain causes eco-systemic concentration. This has been the case even in mammals and birds with no exposure to plastics (such as polar bears and penguins), as well as marine aquatic environment (De Rooij et al. 2004) The harmful health and eco-systemic effects of PVC production and consumption have been well-documented particularly in the last decade (cf. Lithner et al. 2008), although these effects have been downplayed owing to the 'substantial input from the chemical industry' in consultative and stakeholder processes (Sass, Castleman, and Wallinga 2005).

Vinyl 2010 is a Belgium-based partnership registered as a Partnership for Sustainable Development to "provide the organizational and financial infrastructure to manage and monitor the actions undertaken as part of the Voluntary Commitment [by PVC manufacturers]"(UN 2006a, accessed 5 March 2009). It is an initiative of four European lobby groups.³⁰ Although their representative to the UNCSD-15 session suggested in a speech that "transparency and working with stakeholders is key for industry initiatives,"

³⁰ The European Council of Vinyl Manufacturers (ECVM), the European Plastics Converters (EuPC), the European Council for Plasticizers and Intermediates (ECPI) and the European Stabilizer Producers Associations (ESPA).

(Partnerships Team 2007) the partnership neither has consumer groups nor NGOs on board. The UNCSD website suggests that the partnership aims to “improve production processes and products, invest in technology, minimize emissions and waste and boost collection and recycling, according to the guidelines of the EU institutions, and progressing towards sustainability” (UN 2006a, accessed 5 March 2009) Nonetheless its target of cutting raw material and energy consumption would be applied “where economically and ecologically warranted” (UN 2006a, accessed 5 March 2009) When asked how they specified the criteria for “economically and ecologically viable”, a respondent from the partnership answered that there were indeed no criteria, and that reduction of production was not one of their main goals.³¹

3.4.5 Water purification chemicals

Procter and Gamble’s water purification product ‘PUR’ is another example of politics of technology transfer through partnerships. While being regarded as a research and development and/or marketing failure until 2003,

“PUR was relaunched as a CSR product in 2004 within the Safe Drinking Water Alliance, a partnership comprising Procter and Gamble and the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health's Center for Communication Programs (CCP), Population Services International (PSI) and UK charity Care. The Safe Drinking

³¹ Interview with business respondent, May 2007, New York.

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Water Alliance was the first in a series of partnerships between Procter and Gamble and non-profit organizations featuring 'PUR' and was designed as a pilot programme to test three marketing strategies: social marketing, commercial marketing and disaster and humanitarian relief networks" (Hanson 2007).

Indeed, the Alliance was designed as a pilot project to test marketing strategies, which Procter and Gamble continued to use in its later partnerships such as the UNCSO registered Safe Water System (SWS) and Community Water Initiative partnerships. Similar to the humanitarian licenses in biotechnology (cf. Deibel 2009), utilizing a humanitarian relief strategy, Procter and Gamble partnered first with CARE in Ethiopia in 2004, and later with UNICEF in the aftermath of the Indian Ocean tsunami, where Procter and Gamble would provide 'PUR' at low cost, while the funds would be provided by NGOs as well as Procter and Gamble employees. As Greg Allgood from the corporation's consumer health products unit stated,

"Before this date, we'd sold only 3 million sachets in three years. After the tsunami hit, we sold 15 million sachets in 48 hours. AmeriCares used two of its cargo planes: one went to Sri Lanka and the other to Indonesia. We increased production: we went to 24-hour shifts and we installed an additional packing machine." (Hanson 2007).

By 2006, 'PUR' had 10 social markets and its distribution totaled 54 million sachets, turning an R&D failure into a marketing victory.

In our interviews with respondents from different sectors, 'PUR' has been repeatedly mentioned, both as a success story and a scam. The reason for such controversial comments was not only the questionable ethics of these business strategies. They were also concerning the nature of the product: although Procter and Gamble and the US CDC advertise 'PUR' as a product that supplies 'safe drinking water' in developing countries, one respondent suggested that it only cleansed the water from certain contaminants and not others. Therefore it was regarded as misinformation. In fact, the language used in the advertisements of 'PUR' is cautious about the removal process (e.g. "proven to remove the vast majority of bacteria, viruses, and protozoa" without suggesting complete removal, or avoiding the term "proven" regarding heavy metals and chemical contaminants which are also presumably removed)(CDC 2008).

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined the political dimension of partnerships. We focused on three related aspects. First, the process that resulted in partnerships emerging as the official outcome of the WSSD was scrutinized. During their negotiation, partnerships became the object of political contestations. Second, while the WSSD resulted in a weak overall partnerships regime, individual partnerships still have considerable impact and political influence at several levels of governance. Finally, we have presented cases in which partnerships, due to the lack of a strict screening and follow-up process, create a

platform for highly controversial technologies to gain recognition at the UN level. These technologies and practices introduced by Partnerships for Sustainable Development include nuclear energy, biotechnologies, biofuels, PVC and vinyl, to name a few. On this account, partnerships are not just neutral instruments for implementing internationally accepted sustainability norms, such as the Millennium Development Goals and Agenda 21, but rather sites of contestation over distinct technologies and practices. We contend that this broader critical view on partnerships beyond problem-solving is helpful in estimating the overall contribution of the partnership regime to the much required sustainability transition.

List of interviews Chapter 3

- DESA representative at the time of the WSSD, New York, 31 May 2007.
- UN representative, New York, 1 June 2008.
- Southern country delegate to the UNCSD and the WSSD, Denpasar, 8 December 2006
- Diane Quarless, New York, 1 June 2007.
- Jan Pronk, The Hague, 21 April 2008.
- Business respondent, New York, 30 May 2007.

4 The Overall Effects of Partnerships for Sustainable Development³²

4.1 Background

Transnational public-private partnerships have become a highly visible and fiercely debated element of global sustainability governance. Especially since the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, when Partnerships for Sustainable Development were presented as an official outcome. In policy and academic debates alike, partnerships are promoted as solution to deadlocked intergovernmental negotiations, to ineffective treaties and overly bureaucratic international organizations, to power-based state policies, corrupt elites and many other real or perceived problems of global sustainability governance. The previous chapter explained in detail the emergence of partnerships as a key element of the 'post-Johannesburg process'. Yet despite the creation of hundreds of partnerships since 2002, the role and relevance of this new type of global governance remains contested. The systematic

³² This chapter based on a previously publication: Biermann, Frank, Sander Chan, Aysem Mert and Philipp Pattberg (2012) The overall effects of partnerships for sustainable development: more smoke than fire? In: Pattberg, Philipp, Frank Biermann, Sander Chan, and Aysem Mert (2012) Public Private Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Emergence, Influence, and Legitimacy. Cheltenham : Edward Elgar. P. 69-87. Minor revisions have been made to fit within the thesis format.

assessment of the influence of partnerships in global sustainability governance is hence one of the core tasks that should be undertaken. This chapter provides a large-n assessment of the entire 'universe' of public-private partnerships. The focus of this analysis is on three potential functions that partnerships could address.

First, partnerships are often expected to further the development of new norms and regulations in sustainability governance in areas where intergovernmental regulation is largely non-existent. Second, partnerships are believed to advance sustainability governance by helping to implement intergovernmental regulations that do exist, but that are only poorly implemented. Third, partnerships are often expected to increase the inclusiveness of global sustainability governance. In this view, intergovernmental negotiations are seen as dominated by powerful governments and international organizations, while partnerships ensure higher participation of less privileged actors, including voices from the youth, the poor, women, indigenous people and civil society at large. Increased participation from such groups is seen as needed to improve the implementation of international agreements and to strengthen the overall legitimacy, accountability and democratic quality of global sustainability governance.

While these claims of partnerships as agents of norm creation, norm implementation and norm inclusiveness in sustainability governance are frequently made, there is surprisingly little systematic research to vindicate these claims. Evidence for the actual role and relevance of partnerships is scarce and inconclusive. This lacuna impairs a better understanding of partnerships in global governance. Are partnerships

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a sign of a new model of world politics in which intergovernmental negotiations are complemented and sometimes even replaced by networked governance of non-state actors? Or is the contribution of partnerships only modest? To what extent, if at all, are partnerships superior to traditional ways of international cooperation, such as the negotiation of legally binding agreements among governments and their subsequent national implementation?

In order to improve our understanding of the role and relevance of partnerships, this chapter offers a large-n empirical assessment of the entire system of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. We draw on three data sources: first, a meta-analysis of empirical studies of the performance of Partnerships for Sustainable Development; second, the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) database on partnerships (a basic inventory of registered partnerships based on self-reporting); and finally, data from the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database (see chapter Introduction). The remainder of this chapter is organized around the three functions outlined above: norm development, norm implementation, and norm inclusiveness.

4.2 Norm development

One core claim in support of Partnerships for Sustainable Development is that they succeed where governments fail. When governments cannot agree on effective international agreements, or when these agreements are too general to elicit any meaningful action, non-state actors step in with the creation of multi-

stakeholder partnerships. One can reformulate this claim in two hypotheses. First, if partnerships advance norm development, they should be more prominent in areas where public regulation is largely non-existent. That is, there would be a negative correlation between the frequency of partnerships in a given issue area and public regulation of that area. Alternatively, if this was not the case, then partnerships would at least be spread rather equally over a wide range of problems.

The evidence is inconclusive, but hardly supportive of either hypothesis. Partnerships are indeed unequally spread over issue areas, with some areas, such as water (75 partnerships), energy (55) and natural resource management (52), receiving most attention (based on data on their self-declared primary theme when registering with the United Nations, excluding 'cross-cutting issues'). From these areas with highest partnership density, at least energy and natural resource management are densely regulated at the national level, and by a large measure also internationally, for example through the climate and the biodiversity protection regimes. Other areas of equal importance for global environmental change — mining (6), desertification (11), drought (12) or toxic chemicals (4) — are relatively neglected by partnership initiatives (see UN 2006a).

A systematic comparison of the distribution of partnerships with that of multilateral environmental agreements per issue area, through an online treaty locator (CIESIN et al. 2002), suggests that issues that are less regulated or unregulated (like mining) also attract very few partnerships. Relatively more partnerships exist in areas that are heavily regulated, such as marine resources, oceans and seas. This

hypothesis has also been analyzed by Liliana Andonova (2006, 48) based on older data sets from 2003. Both Andonova's and this investigation seem to contradict the hypothesis that partnerships are core agents in norm development. It seems that a fair degree of institutionalization and a relatively high density of intergovernmental agreements facilitate partnership entrepreneurship, whereas areas with obvious governance gaps have been less popular for partnerships. A similar trend emerges from our country studies, for example in Chile (Tondreau 2005). Issues addressed by partnerships in Chile were heavily concentrated on managerial problems, such as sustainable management of forests, improving mapping and citizen information, whereas almost no partnerships existed on issues of major importance but with little national and international regulation, such as mining or aquaculture. Thus, while some areas with major international conventions – such as energy and climate change – are densely populated with partnerships, areas without strong international agreements, such as forestry, are less covered by partnerships.

Hale and Mauzerall (2004) explain this by the private and voluntary nature of partnerships which prevents them from sharing the macro-perspective of the United Nations and international partnership advocates, so that “some key issues have not received the attention they deserve” (2004, 233). This could result in partnerships picking the ‘low hanging fruit’ in highly regulated areas, since they do not necessarily view problems in terms of urgency, but in terms of manageability. Another important factor that might facilitate partnership agreements, and that also contradicts the claim of

partnerships as norm creators, is funding. Partnerships tend to emerge in areas that receive abundant funding from governments, especially from the European Union and the United States; in areas such as climate change, air pollution, energy and water. The United States have pledged in the Johannesburg process to invest 970 million US dollar over three years in water and sanitation projects, and the European Union has offered to launch a 700 million US dollar partnership project on energy development. Both issue areas are now also most densely populated by partnerships. Such financial priorities and patterns of emergence indicate that the emergence of partnerships is supply-driven rather than responsive to a perceived gap in global governance institutions.

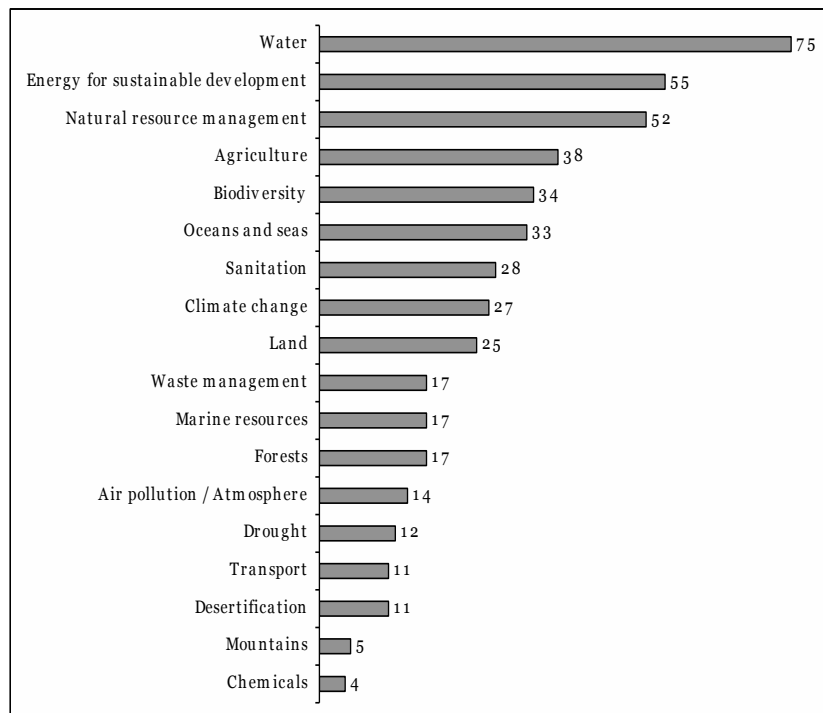


Figure 4.1 Issue areas of Partnerships for Sustainable Development

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In sum, Partnerships for Sustainable Development do not live up to expectations that they play a major role in the development of new norms of global governance. While our current analysis and previous studies do not focus on the performance of individual partnerships in a given issue area, we can conclude that partnerships have been created rather unevenly across issues. This uneven spread across areas, however, does not negatively correlate with the regulatory density in an area. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that partnerships emerge in areas where there is already a fair degree of institutionalization. This is not necessarily a problem, if partnerships serve to contribute to the implementation of existing rules and regulations, it might be more effective for them to flourish in areas with substantial public regulation. However, the crucial question then is whether partnerships contribute to implementation, as is analyzed in the following section. In any case, the claim that partnerships fill regulatory gaps where governments fail to take action is hardly supported by the evidence.

4.3 Norm implementation

The second claim in support of Partnerships for Sustainable Development is that they help to improve the implementation of intergovernmental treaties, agreements and programs. In the official texts from the World Summit on Sustainable Development, strengthened implementation is generally seen as the most important rationale for partnerships. In Johannesburg, multi-stakeholder partnerships were explicitly defined as “specific

commitments by various partners intended to contribute to and reinforce the implementation of the outcomes of intergovernmental negotiations of the WSSD and to help the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals]" (Kara and Quarless 2002). The argument for partnerships asserts that international agreements are poorly implemented and that the international community should focus on this implementation deficit through public-private cooperation and voluntary action of environmental leaders (Bruch and Pendergrass 2003).

To what extent do partnerships contribute to the implementation of intergovernmental agreements and of global sustainability governance in general? Although some studies have addressed implementation (Witte, Streck, and Benner 2003a, Speth 2004, Streck 2004), measuring the effectiveness of the contribution of partnerships towards the implementation of international programs remains difficult. In the following, five hypotheses are analyzed: If partnerships were effective at helping to implement global governance norms, they should be expected: (1) to have minimal capacity in particular in terms of the human and material resources; (2) to create additional sources of funding, on top of what governments and UN agencies were already going to provide; (3) to concentrate on direct environmental improvement rather than creating new bureaucratic procedures; (4) to implement projects in the least developed countries to prioritize the realization of the MDGs; (5) to produce the necessary output that matches the (self-declared) functions of Partnerships for Sustainable Development ('function-output fit', see Introduction and Annex 1).

4.3.1 Sufficient partnership capacity?

Regarding the first hypothesis, there are reasons to doubt that partnerships have the capacity and necessary financial and personnel means to reach their sustainable development goals. For example, 65 per cent of all partnerships registered with the United Nations have declared to be still looking for funds, along with 4-8 per cent of partnerships that search for additional non-financial resources such as computers or office space. In 2006, all partnerships together sought additional funding of 710 million US dollar. The more than 340 partnerships registered with the United Nations are very diverse, and there are many reasons that might explain why the majority of partnerships is still looking for more money: they could plan to expand because they see themselves as rather successful; they could be new and in a formation stage; or unexpected problems could require additional funds. And yet, another – and perhaps more convincing – reading is that there is a more general problem that the vast majority of all partnerships simply lacks the financial means to reach the goals they set for themselves.

4.3.2 New and additional resources?

Second, we have analyzed whether partnerships create new sources of funding in addition to what governments and UN agencies were already going to provide. If partnerships generated a substantial amount of new resources, this would be a positive indicator of their effectiveness in implementing the sustainable development goals. At the end of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, all partnerships initiated around the summit had less than 250 million

US dollar in resources (Hale and Mauzerall 2004, 235). In the larger context, this sum is a trifle only slightly more than the official development assistance of a small country like Luxemburg. Admittedly, until 2004 – in less than two years – funding increased four-fold to 1.02 billion US dollar. However, the main reason for this substantial increase was the reclassification of large intergovernmental programs as multi-stakeholder partnerships, while the programs continue to rely on governmental funding and on existing programs within the United Nations and World Bank programs (Hale and Mauzerall 2004, 235). In any case, this sum is still small compared to 78 billion US dollar in overall official development assistance of the OECD countries (OECD 2004)). Even in multi-sectoral partnerships funding remains largely public: business actors account for only one per cent of new funding, almost the same ratio as nongovernmental organizations, which has led Hale and Mauzerall (2004, 235-236) to conclude that “partnerships have failed to bring a substantial amount of new, multi-sectoral resources to sustainable development activities”. It is also difficult to estimate the percentage of funds that is genuinely new and that has not been allocated for sustainable development before the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Bäckstrand 2006b). Partnerships were often presented to developing country representatives as a more reliable source of funding, as they were not dependent on the uncertain process of negotiations³³. This partially explains why developing

³³ personal communication with members of government delegations to the World Summit on Sustainable Development and to the fourth Preparatory Committee meeting, January 2007.

countries agreed to the partnerships regime at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, but also supports suspicions that substantial parts of the partnership funds are in fact reclassified public development assistance.

4.3.3 Focus on direct impact?

If transnational partnerships contribute to the implementation of global sustainability governance, one could expect that they concentrate on direct environmental impacts. However, in an OECD survey (2006), which looks mainly at partnerships registered with the United Nations that have an environmental focus, only 28 per cent of the responding partnerships considered themselves as providing direct environmental benefits. The OECD researchers interpreted this as an overestimate and suggested that at a closer look, it was more likely that “of the 32 partnerships only three or four had direct environmental impact, with the rest facilitating impact further down the line” (OECD 2006: 24). Another critical finding of the survey is that most partnerships identify as main beneficiaries of multi-stakeholder cooperation “the partners themselves” (79 per cent) or “the partners as well as others” (OECD 2006: 24-25). A similar pattern is found among the Partnerships for Sustainable Development. For example, 165 partnerships report rather vague objectives as their primary goals, such as ‘strengthening the means of implementation’, ‘building institutional frameworks’, and ‘supplying information for decision-making’. A survey by the International Food Policy Research Institute on 124 public-private partnerships in agricultural innovation in nine South American countries concludes

that most of the partnerships reviewed “are not based on genuine demand; do not produce the expected synergistic effects from complementary use of resources, co-innovation, and joint learning; and do not respond to common interests” (Hartwich, Gonzalez, and Vieira 2005, 30).

Likewise, a study of Partnerships for Sustainable Development implementing in Chile found that only half of the partnerships list as objective the “actual increase in coverage of services and life quality” and “reduction of environmental impacts”. Instead, most objectives seem to have only a rather indirect impact on actual problems, for example through “improving mapping that helps to take better public decisions”, “access to credits that allow people to improve their quality of life” or “giving consultancy services for better and more sustainable results from agriculture” (Tondreau 2005). Another proxy for the question of whether partnerships further the implementation of global governance is the number of partnerships that in fact monitor their progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals. In the 250 partnerships that Hale and Mauzerall (2004) studied, merely 69 per cent had a reporting system and less than 50 per cent had a monitoring mechanism in place. Because this study was conducted shortly after the initiation of partnerships, monitoring mechanisms might have been created later. However, there is indicative evidence that the lack of monitoring persists. For example, an OECD survey (2006) states that many partnerships that focused on environmental protection had no monitoring mechanism in place. While 81 per cent of the sampled cases planned an evaluation of the effectiveness of the partnership, only 56 per cent

declared that they would evaluate 'their contribution to the Millennium Development Goals'.

This seems comparable to other multi-stakeholder processes. For example, a McKinsey report on 'intermediate impacts' of the United Nations Global Compact does not find any substantial improvements towards the Compact's principles five years after its initiation. The results of the survey indicate that the foremost reason to sign the Global Compact for nongovernmental organizations was 'to network with other organizations' (64 per cent). Companies most often claimed that they aimed at addressing humanitarian concerns (55 per cent globally) or at becoming familiar with Corporate Social Responsibility (62 per cent in non-OECD countries). However, only 58 per cent of the companies took "any (at least one) action" in support of Global Compact goals. While 67 per cent of companies indicated that their companies "made changes" to implement the Compact's principles, only 9 per cent claimed that the Global Compact had a crucial impact in terms of policy changes (McKinsey 2004).

Of course, improving means of implementation or building institutional frameworks are important elements of a transition towards a more sustainable development. Yet, given these data, the suspicion arises that a sizable part of current partnership activity is not implementation per se, but rather the construction of a bureaucratic procedural universe in parallel to the existing intergovernmental processes. These activities may lay the foundation for effective implementation in the future, but this is far from certain.

4.3.4 Focus on least developed regions?

If partnerships were contributing to the implementation of global sustainability governance, one would expect them to focus on countries and regions where implementation is most urgently needed. According to GSPD analyses it is not the least developed countries but the OECD countries that are the most frequently referred to as countries of implementation for Partnerships for Sustainable Development (Figure 4.2). If partnerships exist to further the implementation of MDGs, such as bringing food and education to the poorest, it is striking that there is no bias among registered partnerships towards operations in least developed countries.

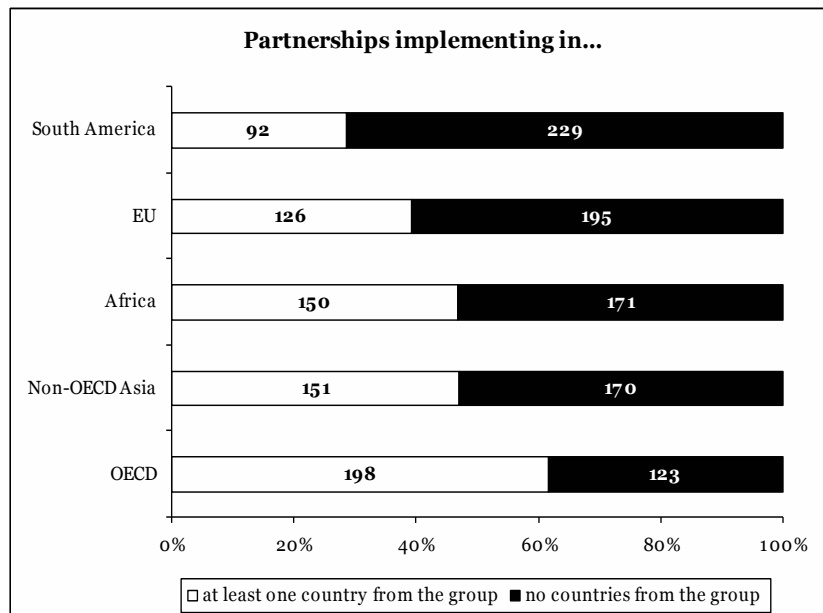


Figure 4.2 Countries of Implementation

4.3.5 Function-output fit?

If partnerships are to fulfill certain functions, they could be reasonably expected to produce certain outputs; such is the logic underlying the measurement of the main dependent variable in the GSPD. This so-called 'function-output fit' (FOF) (see Introduction and Annex 1).reveals the accuracy and consistency of declarations by partnerships on their goals and functions by comparing these with their actual activities and products (output). For instance, to achieve the goal 'training' a partnerships should produce related outputs such as curriculums, course material and seminars. Outputs and functions of each Partnership for Sustainable Development were linked, on the logical basis that the presence of a specific output would indicate at least partial fulfillment of a related functions. An analysis of function-output fits indicated that many partnerships failed at achieving their declared goals. According to GSPD analysis, by June 2008 only 37.6 per cent of all Partnerships for Sustainable Development had a function-output fit (see Figure 4.3). Almost 40 per cent of all partnerships failed to produce the minimum output to achieve their goals. As for partnerships with partial or full function-output fit, it should be noted that matching of functions and outputs can only be taken as a minimal indicator for effective implementation. Even with a full function-output fit, a partnership might fail at, for instance, improving the environment or changing behaviors. Presented with this disquieting evidence one should perhaps ask whether the Partnerships for Sustainable Development is a sample of 'best practices' or a repository of unfulfilled promises.

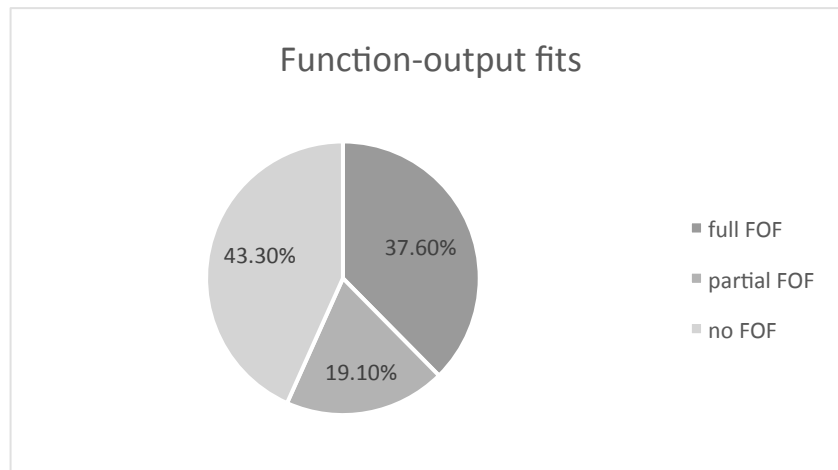


Figure 4.3 Function-output fit of Partnerships for Sustainable Development

In sum, the general perception that partnerships advance the implementation of global sustainability governance seems overly optimistic. A number of indicators – the balance of issue areas and geographical areas, the lack of focus on direct environmental impact, the potential to reach goals and to attract additional funding, and the low correspondence between outputs and functions– all point to the conclusion that the current practice of partnerships does contribute significantly towards the implementation of global sustainability governance.

4.4 Norm inclusiveness

Partnerships for Sustainable Development are often seen as a means to ensure greater participation of all stakeholders. Already in 1992, Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development stipulated that “environmental issues are best handled with

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participation of all concerned citizens”, and at the Rio Summit the notion of major groups was introduced to acknowledge the necessity of broad-based participation in decision-making to achieve sustainable development. Agenda 21 urged governments to retreat “from narrow sectoral approaches” and move towards “full cross-sectoral coordination and cooperation” (UN 1992 paragraph 8.12).

There are various arguments that support broader participation. Some argue that ensuring participatory processes is a public good in itself (Stiglitz 2002, 168-171), while others add that participation also increases the effectiveness of projects and of decisions in general, ensures political sustainability, assists in a more acceptable development transformation and creates more transparent corporate governance (Isham, Narayan, and Pritchett 1995, Isham, Kaufmann, and Pritchett 1997). Proponents of partnerships as means to increase participation offer three core arguments: Firstly, because national governments and public agencies have limited resources, information and skills, they need to collaborate with other sectors to ensure effective governance (Reinicke and Deng 2000, Ruggie 2002, Streck 2004). Secondly, partnerships that bring together a variety of sectors in environmental decision-making will decrease the gap between societies and global institutions that emerges from the impossibility of a global democracy. Finally, partnerships are believed to reduce the costs of compliance to international agreements through creating consensus among major stakeholders. Increased participation through partnerships is often related to their assumed bridge-function between state and non-state actors (Martens 2007, 33). Yet the assumed positive effect of partnerships also relates to

their role in bridging differences between the global 'North' and 'South' on environment and development issues.

Do these promises of greater participation hold? In the following three hypotheses are analyzed, based on the assumption that if partnerships are effective at strengthening participation, they will have: (1) a balanced distribution of (lead) partners from the global North and South; (2) a balanced distribution of (lead) partners from state and non-state actors; and (3) a sufficient participation of traditionally marginalized partners.

4.4.1 Balance between North and South?

First, the overall representation and distribution of leadership roles between North and South is hardly balanced among state actors in Partnerships for Sustainable Development. In more than a quarter of all partnerships registered with the United Nations, industrialized countries are the only state partners involved. In 60 per cent of the registered partnerships, at least one OECD state is a partner. Developing countries are underrepresented; 56 per cent of all partnerships have no state partner from the developing world. The leadership of partnerships lies predominantly with industrialized countries. By the end of 2006, governments that were leading Partnerships for Sustainable Development were almost exclusively from the North. The only developing countries among the group of the ten most-often leading governments were the host countries of the last preparatory conference to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Indonesia) and of the Summit itself (South Africa).

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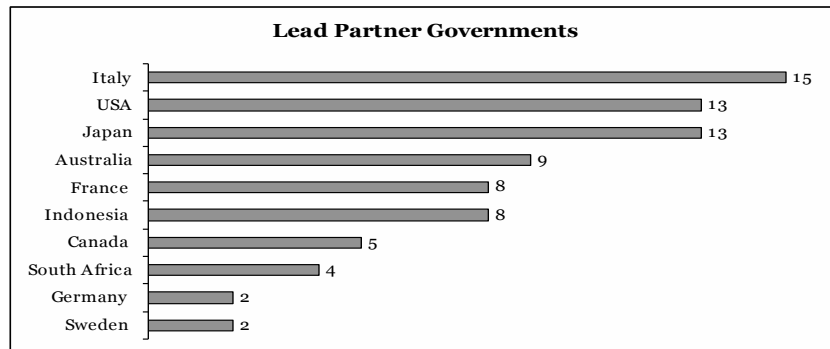


Figure 4.4 Lead partner governments

The general trend that Northern actors play a major role in initiating, funding and operating private-public governance is also supported by sectoral studies. For example, Buse (2004) concludes for global health partnerships that the most active governmental partners are the United States, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Canada, with the consequence that Southern governments and nongovernmental organizations are systematically underrepresented in governing bodies. Even when Southern actors are represented, leadership and initiation might remain with more powerful actors. Bartsch (2006) cites global health partnerships as cases in which no real decision-making power is granted to governments and civil society actors from the South despite their representation. Previous, empirical studies of environmental partnerships have reached similar conclusions. Andonova (2006, 44-45) suggests that, “the more countries are involved in foreign aid transactions, the more their governments and development agencies are likely to have interests and political skills to participate in public-private institutions”.

4.4.2 Increased participation of nongovernmental actors?

It has been argued that partnerships create new opportunities for non-state actors and thus advance their inclusiveness in global sustainability governance. Again, this is hardly supported by data from the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. Across all issue areas, state actors and intergovernmental organizations dominate the partner population of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Only 16 per cent of partnerships have no government as a partner. Public actors are also more likely to take the lead: national and local governments lead 29 per cent of all partnerships, and the United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations another 30 per cent. Taken together, public actors run almost 60 per cent of all partnerships that have emerged from the Johannesburg process. Business actors are in charge of only 3 per cent of all partnerships registered with the United Nations, which is noteworthy given the fact that business actors were highly supportive of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. Nongovernmental organizations lead an additional 8.2 per cent of all registered partnerships, with research and science organizations and networks (12 per cent) and collective actors such as partnership forums or stakeholder councils, as well as cases of missing data accounting for the rest (18.6 per cent).

Back in 2003, Andonova and Levy (2003, 23) had concluded that partnerships are mainly “supply-driven (by what powerful actors have to offer)”. The current sets of data analyzed for this study show that not much has changed since then (Figure 4.5). The only major change over the last years is a sharp decrease in the percentage of

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NGO-led partnerships and a moderate increase in research and science networks as lead partners. The decrease in the number of NGO-led partnerships is largely attributable to partnerships registering themselves or their previous names as the lead partner with the United Nations.

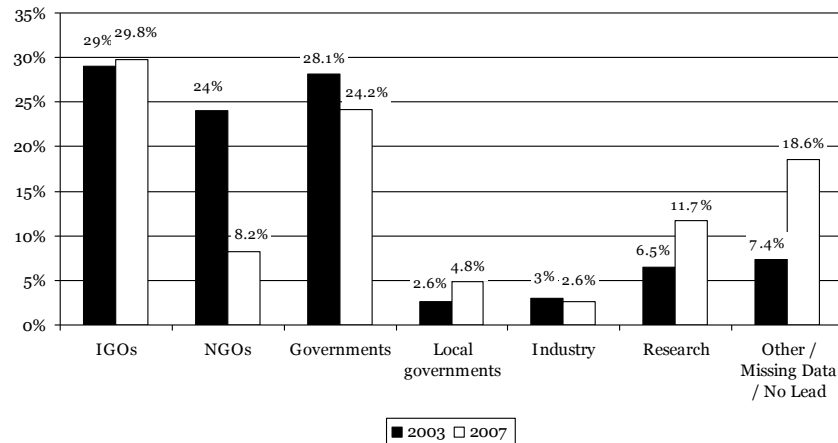


Figure 4.5 Sectoral distribution of lead partners in 2003 and 2007

4.4.3 Increased participation of marginalized groups?

In addition to increasing participation of non-state actors in general, it has been argued that partnerships facilitate greater participation of often-marginalized stakeholders in global politics. These positive expectations are not supported by empirical evidence. Of all partnerships registered with the United Nations as of December 2006, less than one per cent had partners from groups such as farmers, workers and trade unions, indigenous people, women, youth or children. More institutionalized groups are better represented in partnerships, with 9 per cent of all partners in the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process coming from the scientific and technological community, 11 per cent from business

and industry, 19 per cent from nongovernmental organizations, and 30 per cent from governments and 18 per cent from intergovernmental organizations. This picture contradicts the optimistic idea that partnerships ensure the inclusiveness of groups that are otherwise marginalized in global politics. Partnerships seem to rather select state and non-state actors that are already ‘part of the game’, to the exclusion of others. As Buse (2004, 232) quotes one informant of his research on health partnerships, “[i]f you don’t have some money on the table, some time, and expertise, you are not a partner”.

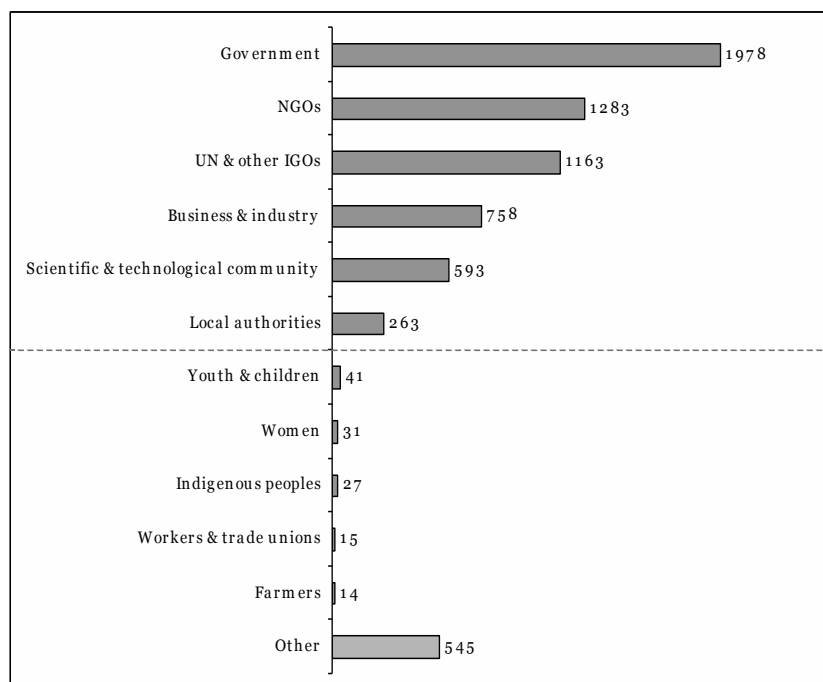


Figure 4.6 Number of partners from different sectors and major groups

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Comparable imbalances are also found in the Global Compact that the United Nations concluded with a number of actors to improve the environmental, social or human rights performance of companies by bringing them together with UN agencies, civil society and labor unions. The impressive portfolio of the initiative, which attracted some 1,430 small and medium-sized enterprises and 1,615 larger corporations, including 108 of the businesses ranked in the FT Global 500, is in stark contrast to low involvement of nongovernmental organizations – merely 7 per cent of all participants are NGOs –. Moreover, there is a lack of consistency in the commitments of business partners: 40 per cent of the companies listed in the Global Compact database (UN 2011) are either inactive or non-communicating participants (most of them being small and medium-sized enterprises). Similar to Partnerships for Sustainable Development, small businesses and civil society have a limited participation in the Global Compact.

In sum, there is empirical support for the claim that partnerships reproduce or even intensify existing relationships in the international system (Martens 2007). This is not restricted to Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Similar patterns are visible in other governance arrangements (e.g. partnerships established through the Global Compact) and other issue areas (e.g. health partnerships). So far, Partnerships for Sustainable Development remain dominated by states and international organizations, and are predominantly led and populated by Northern actors. Participation of 'major groups' is limited to stakeholders that have certain competitive advantages or useful resources. Traditional patterns of political exclusion of weaker

groups tend to be reproduced at the transnational level of partnerships.

4.5 Conclusion

In sum, the balance of evidence in the large-n analysis of all UN-registered Partnerships for Sustainable Development suggests that these new mechanisms of global governance fall short of the high expectations that they were to fulfill. Surely, some partnerships are highly effective and make important contributions to global sustainability governance, yet overall, looking at the complete sample of Partnerships for Sustainable Development this assessment is more critical. Many partnerships are not active. In addition, partnerships do not seem to address core functions where their particular role and comparative advantage was believed to lie: to initiate new global governance norms in areas where governments fail to take action; to help implement existing intergovernmental regulations; and to increase inclusiveness and participation in global governance by bringing in actors that have so far been marginalized. While a few partnerships can be found to make useful contributions in these areas, the overall system of Partnerships for Sustainable Development falls short of high expectations.

How can this be explained? Partnerships are expected to effectively implement sustainable development policies and at the same time ensure a certain level of participation, this appears difficult within the context of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and its follow-up process. If partnerships are created to advance the

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implementation of global governance, this will require like-minded state and non-state actors to form partnerships. Yet if they aim at ensuring broadest possible participation, the chances of effective implementation could be hampered by opposing interests. This contradiction within the partnership system is reflected in the debate on the 'partnership brokers', wherein some argued that "if the partners cannot work out a way to work together and develop mutual trust on their own, then perhaps the partnership should not be formed in the first place" (Warner 2003, 6). It might be, in this case, more realistic and useful for partnerships to focus on implementation, or participation, rather than both.

For global governance, the question is not whether an individual partnership advances same norm-development, implementation and inclusiveness. The question is about the overall role and relevance of the entire system of the more than 340 Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Does this large sample of partnerships help to advance global sustainability governance? Given the large number and variety of partnerships, an answer to this question is difficult. The large-n analysis – drawing on existing studies, on UN data and the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database – comes to a rather somber conclusion. While some partnerships might have some positive effects, this does not seem to be the case for the entire system of partnerships, at least not in comparison with the highly optimistic claims by proponents of partnerships. Partnerships are most frequent in those areas that are already heavily institutionalized and regulated. They are predominantly not concerned with implementation, but rather with institution building. For many of

them it is doubtful whether they have sufficient resources to make any meaningful contribution towards implementation in the first place. This results in poor performance in terms of outputs, most Partnerships for Sustainable Development fail to produce the outputs needed to fully achieve their functions. Finally, the majority of partnerships strengthens the participation of actors that are already influential: governments, major international organizations, large international NGOs and multinational corporations. The balance of evidence suggests that those that were marginalized before remain marginalized in the partnership process.

If the entire system of partnerships does not help much in supporting global sustainability governance, what is then their main rationale? Chapter 3 has already discussed how the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process is politically contingent. Towards the WSSD, delegations felt urged to reach tangible outcomes, even if the partnerships process remained weakly defined. Regarding motivations of individual partners Dedeurwaerdere suggested that “self-regulatory institutions remain subject to takeover by opportunistic individuals and to potentially perverse dynamics” (2005, 4). Even when partnerships overtly seek to contribute to aspects of sustainable development, subsidiary purposes, or self-interest, still plays an important role. Subsequently, partnerships do “not necessarily to foster their main rationale, but for a subsidiary purpose” (Broadwater and Kaul 2005, 3). Indeed, considering the amount of time and funding invested in each partnership, it seems not surprising that partners themselves tend to be the primary beneficiaries of their partnerships.

Part II

*Adapting Partnerships for Sustainable Development to the
Chinese governance context*

5 The Influence of the UN and Transnational Interactions on China's Partnership Governance³⁴

5.1 Introduction

The emergence of partnerships in global sustainable development governance has been acknowledged by scholars from different disciplines. In business literature, the emergence of partnerships has been attributed to changing behaviors in the business community (Hartman, Hofman, and Stafford 1999, Stafford, Polonsky, and Hartman 2000, Juniper and Moore 2002). In public administration partnerships are both suggested and observed arrangements in the restructuring of the public sector. 'New public management' (Hood 1995, Kouwenhoven 1993, Pollit and Boukaert 2011, Savas 2000) for instance suggests that partnerships can deliver public services more efficiently than 'traditional' government bureaucracies. Other scholars attribute the emergence of partnerships to the rise of transnational activism and the empowerment of non-traditional actors in politics, e.g. NGOs, foundations, faith based organizations, trade unions, non-profit organizations, civic groups etc. (Hudson 2001, Keck and Sikkink 1998). Acknowledgment of partnerships as governance instruments has also come from policy practitioners. At

³⁴ This chapter will be submitted for publication as an article.

the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) partnerships were declared an official outcome, dubbed ‘Type II outcome’³⁵. These partnerships were considered instrumental for the implementation of internationally agreed outcomes. The wide acknowledgement, both in policy and academia, of partnerships, however, disguises quite distinct meanings of partnerships. Partnerships have been styled by pronoun (public-private; private; strategic), as well as by constellation of partners (NGO-business, business-government, community-government, etc.). In global governance, partnerships have been seen as (1) a governance instrument, fulfilling certain governance functions like implementation or monitoring (Haas 2004); (2) a particular kind of organization composed by two or more parties which pool resources in the pursuit of shared goals (Brinkerhoff 2002); and (3) a mode of governance that involves multiple partners – i.e. the government collaborates with nongovernmental agencies to achieve common goals (Reinicke 1998). The latter could be considered ‘partnership governance’. Rather than referring to a particular (type of) organization, partnership governance refers to a mode of governance wherein actors from different sectors associate and dissociate continuously as they rely on each other’s resources (reputation, funds, knowledge, authority, etc.).

In this chapter I investigate the influence of UN sustainable development conferences and processes as well as transnational

³⁵ The more traditional outcomes of UN summits, such as political declarations, guidelines, action plans and treaties, were restyled as ‘type 1 outcomes’.

interactions on the emergence of partnerships and partnership governance in China. I investigate the influence of the UN by examining explicit policies, processes, and schemes to promote partnerships in sustainable development, in particular the semi-formalized scheme of Partnerships for Sustainable Development emanating from the WSSD process. I also look at other UN summits that have been held since 2002, in particular Rio+20, and conferences under the UNFCCC climate process (e.g. Copenhagen, Cancun), to assess whether China has followed up on Partnerships for Sustainable Development, for instance by presenting its own partnerships at side-events. The 'influence of transnational interactions', I understand as inter-sectoral interactions in global sustainable development governance. These interactions sometimes become manifest at UN summits, but they are not restricted to UN processes. I emphasize that the emergence of partnerships in China, and the emergence of the conditions that enable partnership governance, are closely related to structural changes in China's politics, economy and civil society.

The study of partnerships in China's sustainable development is, to some extent, complicated by the fact that there is no clearly defined set of partnerships, apart from the group of formal Partnerships for Sustainable Development that have been implemented in China. Generally, collaborative arrangements, for instance between NGOs and business, are still rather uncommon. Therefore, I do not only focus on the sample of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, I also investigate whether and how conditions have become more

favorable for the emergence of partnerships in China's sustainable development. This leads to two main questions:

- Have UN summits and related processes, in particular the Partnerships for Sustainable Development scheme contributed to the emergence of partnerships in China?
- Have transnational interactions led to conditions that are conducive to partnership governance in China?

For this research I undertook desktop research by analyzing official documents and reviewing literature. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with organizers and attendees of UN conferences. I made use of the Global Sustainability Partnership Database (GSPD); a database of UNCSD registered Partnerships for Sustainable Development, developed by the partnerships research team at the Institute of Environmental Studies at VU University Amsterdam. This investigation specifically uses descriptive data contained in the GSPD (see Introduction) on the geographic focus of Partnerships for Sustainable Development and their form of organization (e.g. the number of partners from China). A series of interviews was held between 2007 and 2012 with organizers, partners in partnerships, and, Chinese participants who were involved in UN environmental conferences, in particular the latest summits (the 2002 WSSD and Rio +20, but also – to a lesser extent – conferences organized in the UNFCCC climate change process (COP/MOP conferences). I also held interviews with representatives of some of China's leading environmental NGOs (Friends of Nature,

Shanshui Conservation Center, Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs, China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO). Other interviews were conducted with local and central government agencies, the EU delegation in Beijing and academic institutions. Moreover, I interviewed staff of bilateral and multilateral programs that have the objective to build partnerships, especially in sustainable forestry and nature conservation: the EU China Natural Forest Management Programme (NFMP), the International Model Forest Network (IMFN), and, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF). The latter two partnerships are officially registered as Partnerships for Sustainable Development with the UNCSD.

I proceed to review the so-called Bali Guiding Principles, the guiding document for Partnerships for Sustainable Development, to offer a better understanding of the scheme. Subsequently, I discuss the influence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, whether the formalized scheme had an impact on the emergence of new partnerships in China's sustainable development. Then my investigation turns to the influence of transnational interactions at the global level of sustainable development governance (e.g. at UN environmental conferences) on relations between transnational actors in China. The emphasis in this part of the research is on the role of NGOs; how they relate to business and the government respectively. The reason for this focus is the fact the Chinese NGOs have been claiming environmental and social responsibility much earlier and to a greater extent than for instance business actors. In the conclusion I summarize and address the main questions.

5.2 Contestation between PFSD and pfsd

Partnerships for Sustainable Development presented at the 2002 WSSD ostensibly fit rather neatly in a more comprehensive global sustainable development governance as transnational implementation instruments: “specific commitments by various partners intended to contribute to and reinforce the implementation of the outcomes of the intergovernmental negotiations of the WSSD (Programme of Action and Political Declaration) and to help achieve the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals” (Kara and Quarless 2002, 2). By assigning the limited function of implementation, partnerships are not seen as contradictory to state centered governance. States retained their prerogative over decision-making and goal-formulation. Partnerships have, however, also been advocated as alternatives for state-centered governance (Reinicke 1998). The meaning of partnerships is more disputed than their framing as implementation instruments suggests. In fact, Partnerships for Sustainable Development as an official outcome of the WSSD was rather fiercely disputed; delegations had different understandings of what partnerships are and how they fit in global sustainability governance (see Chapter 3, Mert 2012, and Mert and Chan 2012). To some extent these contestations are discernible from the set of guiding principles for Partnerships for Sustainable Development that were agreed upon at a preparatory committee in Bali (27-7 June 2002), the so-called Bali Guiding Principles (Kara and Quarless 2002). On the one hand, the Guidelines merely acknowledged partnerships as a transnational

phenomenon. For instance, the Guidelines emphasize the voluntary nature of partnerships, “based on mutual respect and shared responsibility of the partners involved” (2002, 2). This principle could be regarded as an intergovernmental recognition of self-organization in society. Partnerships do not necessarily involve actions by governments, they rather ‘happen’ through spontaneous social self-organization. According to the Guidelines, partnerships should be multi-stakeholder arrangements, which can be “any combination of partners” (2002, 2). The formation of partnerships therefore takes place outside the realm of traditional government, leaving considerable room for self-definition by stakeholders. The Guidelines are also not outspoken about transparency and accountability, stating that partnerships “should be developed and implemented in an open and transparent manner and in good faith and report in regular intervals (‘self-reporting’)” (2002, 2-3). Further directions on how accountability and transparency should be organized are lacking. Rather the Guidelines defer the arrangement of accountability, in particular reporting, to the “good faith” (2002, 2) of partnerships. On the other hand, the Guidelines assume a certain degree of institutionalization within global governance, in particular within the UN system. For instance, partnerships are expected to have a global link as they “serve as mechanisms for the delivery of the globally agreed commitments by mobilizing the capacity for producing action on the ground” (2002, 2). Moreover, partnerships should be “consistent with sustainable strategies of the countries, regions and communities where partnership implementation takes place” (2002, 2). According to the Guidelines “tangible results” (2002,

3) should ensue implementation, in the form of “clear objectives, specific measurable targets and timeframes” (2002, 3). In other words, partnerships should contribute in absolute terms to global sustainable development. From this perspective, partnerships are not a mode of governance, but vehicles for absolute contributions. Moreover, the Guidelines mention a “follow up process” (2002, 3) for Partnerships for Sustainable Development, which should establish the UNCSD as a focal point for the discussion, administration and registration of partnerships. This constitutes a formal (if weak) institutionalization of partnerships in the UN system.

The Bali Guiding Principles contain paradoxes and opposite views about how partnerships fit in global environmental governance. On the one hand Partnerships for Sustainable Development are considered an addition to global sustainable development institutions; partnerships are institutionalized and assigned a role within a more encompassing global governance system. On the other hand partnerships are also seen as transnational, self-organizing arrangements, quite separate from formal institutions of global governance. These two different views of partnerships, I would respectively refer to as ‘institutionalist’ and ‘transnationalist’. The different views of partnerships are somewhat in line with Robert Whitfield’s (2005) distinction between Partnerships for Sustainable Development (PFSD, capitalized) and partnerships for sustainable development (pfsd, lowercase). While PFSD refer to an intergovernmentally defined process of registered partnerships, pfsd “do not seek any such links” (2005, 361). Whitfield also adds that the use of partnerships and the development of transnational linkages

cannot be limited to an official Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. If partnerships are really to contribute to sustainable development, Partnerships for Sustainable Development can only be “examples of good practice” (2005, 362) to follow. In the following, I will evaluate whether and how Partnerships for Sustainable Development as an institutionalized process in global governance, has influenced the building of partnerships in China’s sustainable development. Subsequently, I will assess to which extent transnational interactions have empowered transnational actors and changed societal relations in the Chinese context to create better conditions for partnership governance.

5.3 The influence of the PFSD process on China?

Typically, Partnerships for Sustainable Development as implementation instruments in global sustainable development do not require actual partnerships at the local level between domestic transnational actors. Rather, their reason for existence is their absolute contribution to global problem solving. The emphasis on absolute targets and timeframes, as formulated in the Bali Guiding Principles, plays to the attractiveness of bigger and more populous countries as implementation context. Indeed, countries like India and China are well represented as implementation countries for Partnerships for Sustainable Development (see Chapter 7). Undoubtedly global sustainable development will greatly depend on developments in China. For instance, Thomas Pogge (2004) observed

that the attainment of MDG-1³⁶ largely depended on the reduction of the number of extreme poor people in China³⁷. Similarly, Von Braun et al. argue that “China will remain the major force driving aggregate progress toward MDG goals” (2004, 8). Many Partnerships for Sustainable Development implementing in China similarly emphasize (potential) achievements in absolute terms, thereby linking implementation in China as absolute contributions to global sustainable development. For instance the Global Methane Initiative (formerly: Methane to Markets Partnership) vindicates its activities in China because “China's estimated anthropogenic methane emissions ranked 1st in the world”³⁸. The Collaborative Labeling & Appliance Standards Program (CLASP) hopes to save “376 megatons of CO₂ – more than 446 terawatt hours of end-use energy – per year by 2020”³⁹. Indeed, the Chinese context lends itself for impressive numbers, but the framing in terms of absolute targets and achievements also confines the instrument of partnerships to the narrow function of implementation. Additional and alternative functionalities are neglected, such as the potential of partnerships to facilitate reform in governance, or to widen participation in governance.

³⁶ Millennium Development Goal 1 is to halve extreme poverty by 2015.

³⁷ Measured against 1990 as a baseline.

³⁸ See www.globalmethane.org/partners/china.aspx. Accessed 26 January 2013.

³⁹ See www.clasponline.org/en/WhereWeWork/CurrentProgramLocations/China/CLASP_Assistance. Accessed 26 January 2013.

Considering the emphasis on absolute attainments, it may not come as a surprise that China was an important target country for Partnerships for Sustainable Development: 55 out of 430 partnerships claimed to be implementing in China (See Annex 2). On the other hand, so much partnership activity in China may be surprising given the fact that China has been reluctant to give its approval to the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process as an official outcome of the WSSD (see Chapter 3). China and other developing countries were concerned that Partnerships for Sustainable Development could channel bilateral and multilateral resources directly to non-state entities, such as opposition, minority, and nongovernmental groups.⁴⁰ This concern was however countered, both diplomatically as well as in the organization of partnerships. According to Zehra Aydin⁴¹, member of the organizing bureau of the WSSD, it took the organizing bureau of the WSSD a closed meeting with the Chinese delegation to get them to agree on the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. In the meeting, China was reassured that the influence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development would in fact be limited, because – strictly speaking – only partnerships that were presented at WSSD would count as official ‘Type II outcomes’. Partnerships registered after the WSSD could be considered as falling outside the official scheme in case they would be perceived as overstepping the sovereignty of

⁴⁰ Interview with Jan Pronk, special UN envoy to the WSSD, 21 April 2008, The Hague.

⁴¹ Interview with Zehra Aydin, Interview Zehra Aydin, member of organizing team of WSSD, 17 May 2008, New York.

states. This formalistic argument sufficiently relegated the status of Partnerships for Sustainable Development for the Chinese delegation to agree. Moreover, China emphasized that partnership activities in China should be considered as contributions to global sustainable development, rather than to local environmental protection, and even less to governance reform in China. For instance, one of the larger Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China, the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, was approved by the Ministry of Finance as China's "contribution to global biodiversity conservation" (Ministry of Finance 2002, see Chapter 8). Another reason why China agreed with the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process was reputational. According to a Chinese NGO delegate:

"they [Chinese delegation] didn't want to be an outsider. At the same time, domestically there are different means to control partnership development. They still saved the idea that civil society is different in China compared to the rest of the world. They want to be an international player, one that people say about: it's good to us. There are enough checks in China. They can control budgets, what goes to whom. So that is not a big problem. There is no need to say: you can only partner through bilateral [cooperation], you cannot partner through NGOs. Because there are a lot of instruments and tools that are there to control."⁴²

⁴² Interview with NGO delegate at the 2002 WSSD, 21 March 2011, Beijing.

Given the developments after the WSSD, there was also no real need for the government to exert control and check the emergence of partnerships in China, because the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process did not lead to many new partnerships in China's sustainable development. Partnerships for Sustainable Development implementing in China generally had a larger geographic scope, in other words: they were implementing in multiple countries. 60 per cent of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China had a global geographic scope, while another 29 per cent and 9 per cent had either regional (Asia) or sub-regional (East-Asia/Asia-Pacific) scopes (Figure 5.1). Only one Partnership for Sustainable Development (Sino-Italian Cooperation Program for Environmental Protection) focused exclusively on China. Importantly, rather than constituting local Chinese partnerships, these global, regional and sub-regional partnerships usually featured one or even no Chinese partners (Chapter 7). In other words, these global and (sub-) regional partnerships are not actual partnerships in the domestic context, but they take the form of a project under a single national partner. With a few exceptions Partnerships for Sustainable Development were not organized as partnerships at the local or national level in China. Only 10 per cent of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development actually formed partnerships domestically.

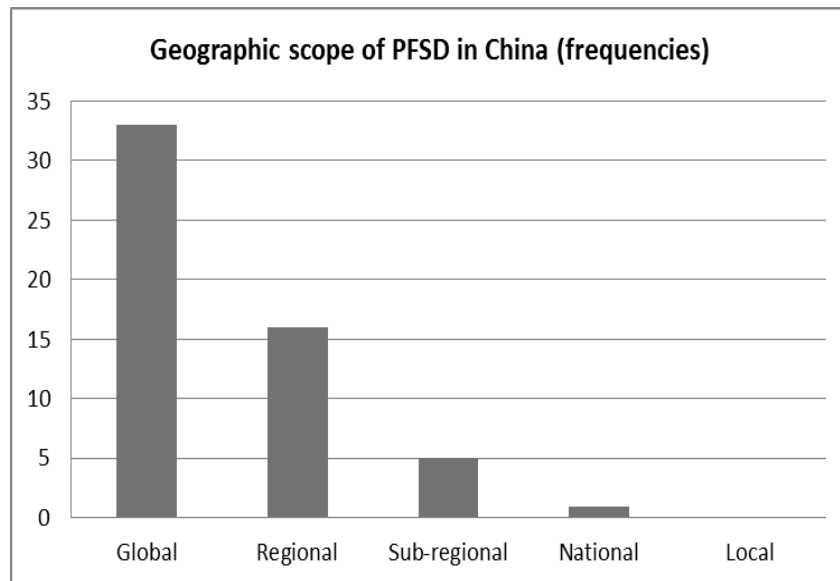


Figure 5.1 Geographic scope of partnerships in China

Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China hardly set examples for partnership building in China; because they were not partnerships in an organizational sense. One could argue that Partnerships for Sustainable Development nonetheless generated 'best practices'. The 55 Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China did significantly better in terms of outputs than the global average (see Chapter 6 and Chan 2012, 2009). While Partnerships for Sustainable Development deliver outputs, their functions and the targets are still defined in global partnerships (often through international organizations, and foreign governments); and targets and functions are not linked to local or national priorities. Therefore, within the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process China seems 'merely' a country of implementation; few partnerships

exclusively focus on China; participation by Chinese actors is low; and targets and timeframes are linked to global priorities rather than national and local ones. The conclusion therefore seems to be that the influence of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process on the development of partnerships of China is negligible. Dorit Lehrack⁴³, organizer of China's first NGO delegation to a UN sustainable development summit in 2002, reflects:

“I cannot see that there's a lot of work or money that went to Chinese NGOs based on that Partnerships for Sustainable Development approach. I don't know any of the organizations that got it based on that”.

However, she also adds

“I think the idea of partnership is getting stronger in China. At least the WSSD and other international events, followed up by other the national discussion in China [...] built up a kind of an acceptance of different stakeholders. So the government also knows there are people in society who can be good advisors, who may have a different opinion.”

This discussion will continue beyond the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process, to argue that UN interactions and conferences have indeed influenced the conditions for partnership governance in China, in particular: transnational interactions at UN conferences

⁴³ Interview with Dorit Lehrack, Organizer of the 2002 Chinese NGO Delegation at the 2002, WSSD, 21 March 2012, Beijing.

have influenced the conditions for partnership governance in China's sustainable development.

5.4 The influence of transnational interactions on partnerships in China

Large UN conferences have been regarded as 'political theater' (Death 2011) where transnational actors assert influence and develop activities quite separate from intergovernmental processes. Rather than guided by official schemes transnational collaboration happens in conjunction with UN processes and summits. Partnerships for sustainable development do not require an official register at the UN, or a greater institutionalization within the UN system. They can exist largely outside any formal UN or national governance system, defining targets and time frames themselves, rather than following intergovernmental agreements and commitments. These transnational partnerships, however, are rather uncommon in China. Jennifer Turner (2003) observed that environmental business-NGO partnerships "examples are much more difficult to find in China [than in the West]" (2003, 23). Compared to the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, the influence of transnational interactions at the UN (e.g. at environmental summits) is rather indirect. Transnational interactions at UN summits have inspired learning and collaborative attitudes, which can be essential to the emergence and formation of partnerships in China. Fundamental changes in the composition of actors in China's environmental governance, the emergence of a

more or less independent civil society, growing business interest, and growing acceptance and experimentation by government (local and central) create better conditions for partnerships in 2012 (Rio+20), compared to 2002 (WSSD). The following discusses transnational linkages that affect the Chinese governance context for partnerships, in particular regarding the relation between international and domestic NGOs, between Chinese NGOs and business and between NGOs and public authorities in China.

5.4.1 International NGO - domestic NGO and NGO-NGO

partnerships: From dependency to interdependence?

Transnational linkages have been considered transformative in global sustainable development governance (Tarrow 2005, Matsuzawa 2007, Willetts 2001). However, a vertical transnational linkage, i.e. the relation between the global and domestic with local civil society is a route of transformation that is much less investigated (rare studies include Friedman 1999, Chowdhury 2011, Morton 2005a). Generally, scholars have assumed a mutually reinforcing dynamic between global civil society and civil society at lower levels of governance. Less attention has been given to possible asymmetries between different transnational actors at different levels of global governance.

Chinese civil society, particularly the NGO sector, is still in a comparatively formative phase. They are confronted with possibilities as well as limitations in their encounters with foreign peers who generally have greater resources, better linkages and more experience. Moreover, international NGOs have often failed to

appreciate Chinese civil society organization, for instance by casting doubt over whether Chinese NGOs are 'real' civil society. The Tibet Campaign at the 2002 WSSD for example regarded the Chinese NGO delegation summit as a government-organized scheme to disrupt their events (International Campaign for Tibet 2002). The organizer of the NGO delegation recalled: "they criticized us, our delegation, for supporting the [Chinese] government ... [we told them] not to confuse the Chinese [government] delegates [with NGO delegates]"⁴⁴. In fact, the Chinese government's interference was restricted to some logistical assistance (for instance arranging passports). The larger international NGOs that Chinese NGO delegates encountered were not eager to enter into more strategic collaborations. A NGO delegate describes:

"[we were] small Chinese NGOs among large international NGOs that are [connected to] international NGO networks and have been following negotiations since they started twenty years ago. They were very experienced, very high level. They knew the policy guys, they had friends among delegates. Being small ... international NGOs saw us there, they were nice to us, but they couldn't see us working together"⁴⁵.

Rather than brokering any formal partnerships, Chinese NGOs at the WSSD were there to learn from their international peers, to "get an

⁴⁴ Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

⁴⁵ Interview with Lina Li, officer at Greenovation Hub, Beijing, 11 July 2012.

understanding about how big international NGOs work”⁴⁶. Learning, as an activity, reflects an asymmetry in resources which stands in the way of partnerships on the basis of equality⁴⁷. Even the very basics of the UN sustainable development summit were yet unclear to most Chinese environmental NGOs in 2002.

“Before we sent people out, we arranged trainings to understand: what is going to happen; what the situation is; what will be discussed in Johannesburg; why it concerns China; why people in China should know about it; and how they could have positive impact. So that was a very good preparation work.”⁴⁸

While the NGO delegation organizers tried to bring international NGOs and Chinese NGOs together, this could not have resulted in more strategic partnerships. “We brought them [international and Chinese NGOs] together, the big ones that are also working in China ... but not everyone spoke English”⁴⁹. Therefore, Chinese NGO participation did not result in the formation of new partnerships, even when Partnerships for Sustainable Development loomed large over Johannesburg in 2002.

In recent years however, parts of China’s NGO sector have gained a more equal footing with their international peers, mostly due to two

⁴⁶ Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

⁴⁷ Even today, the majority of Chinese NGOs remain underfunded, understaffed (Lu 2007a) and do not seem to make equal partners in transnational partnerships.

⁴⁸ Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

⁴⁹ Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

parallel and related processes. Firstly, international NGOs in China have become increasingly localized and adapted to the Chinese context. Sometimes this happened under pressure of registration requirements. For instance, to allow registration under Chinese law Conservation International's China program localized and adopted a new name, Shanshui Conservation Center, and became a Chinese NGO rather than the Chinese branch of an international NGO (see Chapter 8, for a more detailed account)⁵⁰. Secondly, Chinese NGOs have also gained greater 'transnational skills' (Hachmann and Potter 2007), such as working with different organizations from different sectors, working internationally, to the extent that they have become resourceful, professional organizations in their own right. Professionalization of China's NGO sector has also been witnessed at UN processes where "[Chinese NGO delegates] that join in the process [of UN conferences] are more professional, so then there's more attention, also from media"⁵¹. Another factor in the reevaluation of Chinese NGOs, in particular in the UNFCCC climate change process, is the fact that China has become one of the main players in global governance. As the importance of China in intergovernmental negotiations increases, Chinese civil society also enjoys greater international esteem.

⁵⁰ Interview with Yang Fangyi, officer at Shanshui Conservation Center, Beijing, 20 August 2012.

⁵¹ Interview with Lina Li.

5.4.2 NGO – business partnerships: From contestation to collaboration?

UN sustainable development summits have showcased business responsibilities and NGO-business partnerships, for instance at side events. To some degree this has inspired Chinese business and NGOs to engage in dialogue and collaboration, although NGO-business partnerships remain uncommon. The slow but steady development of NGO-business partnerships in China is also informed by changes in the domestic civil society sector.

While Chinese NGOs have often been reluctant to take an opposing stance towards government, they have been more outspoken towards business actors (e.g. Lu 2007a). For instance, the Institute of Public and Environmental Affairs (IPE), a Beijing based NGO, is blacklisting China's largest corporate water polluters⁵². Instead of taking on a defensive attitude, some corporations sought collaboration with IPE, provided discharge data, and used data to improve their environmental management. IPE carefully maneuvered such collaborative attitude by referring to the authoritative role of government, and the additional role of NGOs in monitoring. According to Ma Jun, director of IPE, NGO-business relations "remain quite dynamic. Sometimes they [business] come to our office and they are not very happy, they sometimes shout at you"⁵³. When Ma Jun points out he uses government data,

⁵² Water Pollution Map, see www.ipe.org.cn, accessed 24 January 2013.

⁵³ Interview with Ma Jun, director of IPE, Beijing, 15 March 2012.

“they understand all this data comes from government monitoring, they know it’s not [only] the NGOs who complain about the polluters, so we started, with data, a platform, that can be recognized and trusted by both side, and we can have a common, reasonable, dialogue to try to solve the problem”⁵⁴.

It should be mentioned that this type of collaborative arrangement is still fairly uncommon in China, and only few companies work in such direct collaboration with NGOs. Many of these companies are foreign multinational companies with a Western consumer base (such as H&M, Coca Cola, Nike, Wal-Mart, Siemens, Adidas, and Levi’s).

“The main initiative comes from Western companies, and it’s more often Chinese companies producing for Western companies because of consumer pressure in Western Europe and the US”⁵⁵.

Ma Jun illustrates his reorientation towards collaboration with the businesses by his changing travel schedule:

“Over the past years my trips have become more like those business trips, to one meeting after another, with the business community. But I think it is important”⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ Interview with Ma Jun.

⁵⁵ Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

⁵⁶ Interview with Ma Jun.

Li Bo, director of Friend of Nature (FON)⁵⁷, points to a change in attitude from antagonism towards collaboration:

“Oftentimes groups like us, we can stand on this side of the river, and we cry and shout at the other side, business or government, whereas [we can make] corporations listen, by actually crossing the river, and talking to the other side”⁵⁸.

Another driver behind the emergence of business-NGO partnerships is the fact that the Chinese NGO sector’s long reliance on foreign funding, from foreign governments, international NGOs and international organizations, is no longer feasible. Most foreign funders have reduced or even cut their China programs. In bilateral programs remaining funds are often channeled to benefit donors; for instance, the EU requires an ‘EU dimension’ in its environment and development actions in China, because “what is different with China is that China has money as compared to other low-/middle income countries”⁵⁹. Similarly, “international organizations reduced their contributions to China because the international aid level to China has been reduced, but private foundations increased”⁶⁰. NGOs are forced to raise funds from the corporate sectors as foreign funding is reduced. Moreover, Chinese businesses are also more willing to engage, as they take up environmental and social responsibilities. An

⁵⁷ FON was China’s first registered environmental NGO, and remains one of the most influential.

⁵⁸ Interview with Li Bo, director of Friends of Nature, 15 March 2012.

⁵⁹ Interview with Magnus Gislev, head of Environment department, EU delegation, 3 June 2009.

⁶⁰ Interview with Yang Fangyi.

indication of this changing attitude is the number of CSR reports published in China. According to a recent survey between 1999 and 2005 only 22 of such reports were published; in 2011 more than 800 reports were published (GoldenBee Management Consulting Co., China WTO Tribune, and International Research Center for Social Responsibility & Sustainable Development of Peking University 2011). While CSR reporting does not necessarily result in transnational linking with NGOs, the acceptance of responsibilities beyond immediate profit making and the potential to gain in reputational terms are incentives to enter into partnerships with civil society.

The mutual interest in reframing business and environmental NGO relations towards collaboration became manifest at the Rio+20 conference. The China Going Green Dialogue (a side event organized by the Alashan Society for Entrepreneurs and Ecology (SEE), Shanshui Conservation Center, and Greenovation Hub) brought a number of leading Chinese businesses (like Broad Air Conditioning and real estate developers Vantone and Vanke) together. While these businesses are interested in presenting their 'solutions' at a global venue, participation also provides them with access to the Chinese government delegations. One NGO participant to Rio+20 observed that "they stayed in the same hotel with the government delegation"⁶¹. The 'greener' companies consider "more ambitious (...)

⁶¹ Interview with Patrick Schroeder, international officer at CANGO, Beijing, 4 July 2012.

international commitments as good for their business”⁶². The greener attitude, however, is not found widely across businesses and industry, as many “businesses don’t want to change, and want to keep things as they are now”⁶³. In that sense, greater participation and collaboration between Chinese business and NGOs at Rio+20 remains rather unique. However, clear indications point towards China’s emerging corporate activism in sustainable development. The recent history of the SEE foundation is an interesting example. SEE was initially set up by a group of business executives who, after they traveled through West China and noticed the destructive impact of desertification, decided to mobilize support among their other business leaders to abate desertification (Society for Entrepreneurship & Ecology 2005). In recent years, SEE has taken up a wider work field, which apart from desertification abatement also includes biodiversity conservation. Moreover, backed by business and private funds, SEE registered as a fund with the Ministry of Civil Affairs; one of the first of such in the area of environmental protection. Indeed, the number of registered funds at the MoCA – while increasing – remains rather low, most of them addressing issues relating to social development and poverty alleviation rather than environmental protection (Ministry of Civil Affairs 2011).

⁶² Interview with Patrick Schroeder.

⁶³ Interview with Patrick Schroeder.

5.4.3 Government–NGO partnerships: From control to self-definition?

The Chinese government has considerably changed its attitude towards civil society, allowing a surge in the number of registered civil society organizations (East Asian Institute 2012). However, Chinese civil society also remains severely restricted, through regulations and complicated registration procedures (Yu 2006). Meanwhile the need for control seems to be decreasing, because trust between some government agencies and NGOs is growing. For instance, NGOs are increasingly self-controlling and redefining their roles in environmental governance alongside government authorities.

Government control and restrictions to the NGO sector plays out in different ways. First, control is exercised through a formal registration process. To be registered as social organization (as NGOs are commonly referred to), the organization has to go through a so-called dual registration procedure. An organization seeking registration needs to find a ‘mother-in-law’, a government agency which approves and supports registration, and which oversees and takes responsibility for an organization (Erie et al. 2009). This potentially leads to significant interference in the operations of social organizations. Government agencies are not always keen on taking up responsibilities for organizations beyond their own bureaucratic organization. Subsequently, the organization also needs to seek registry with the Ministry of Civil Affairs and comply with various restrictions, relating to e.g. work field, membership and financing. Second, control of civil society occurs through so-called

Governmentally Organized NGOs (GONGOs). According to Patrick Schroeder, GONGOs like the All-China Environment Federation (ACEF) are encouraged to participate in international summits by the government, and are even providing some funding. GONGOs therefore enjoy a relatively privileged position compared to other NGOs. GONGOs are also expected to “coordinate all environmental NGO activities”⁶⁴, but in reality “they can’t really keep track of what’s all happening. Grassroots organizations, if they don’t want to, won’t share what they do”⁶⁵. For example, in the UNFCCC climate change process between the Tianjin and the Cancun conferences, NGOs effectively resisted and isolated the All-China Environment Federation.

“NGOs [from the China Climate Change Action Network] issued a joint statement in Tianjin. The All-China Environment Federation took this statement, changed bits and sent it around, saying: ‘this is the statement we have and we want all NGOs to sign on to it’. Then the NGOs were like ‘hang on, but this is what we wrote, how then can you take this and send it back to us and tell us to sign, that’s not right”⁶⁶.

A consultation followed between them, and NGO input indeed led to a different statement.

⁶⁴ Interview with Patrick Schroeder.

⁶⁵ Interview with Patrick Schroeder.

⁶⁶ Interview with Patrick Schroeder.

“I think, at the end, the All-China Environment Federation was basically on their own”⁶⁷.

The distinction between NGOs and GONGOs is also not as clear-cut as their names might suggest. Secured of government support, GONGOs may in some cases take more independent stances than NGOs that have still have to gain trust from government authorities (Wu 2003). For instance, the Chinese Association for NGO Cooperation, originally set up by the government, has transformed in “something of an NGO with strong relations to the government”⁶⁸. According to Dorit Lehrack to be “linked to the state”⁶⁹ also entails

“a certain independence in what [NGOs] do, in how they accept money, on where they travel. In some way they are independent, in some way they are dependent. They want to keep some dependency... Well they don’t see it as dependency, they see it as a link”⁷⁰.

In scholarship, Peter Ho addressed the juxtaposition between dependence and independence of China’s civil society, as he argues that the ‘embeddedness’ of Chinese NGOs can be considered conducive to activism (Ho 2007).

At the ministerial level, officials have also become more accustomed with cross-sector collaboration, although it often remains in the form

⁶⁷ Interview with Patrick Schroeder.

⁶⁸ Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

⁶⁹ Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

⁷⁰ Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

of consultation. The use of civil society and cross-sectoral cooperation is primarily viewed from a functional perspective:

“Firstly, it is information, to get outside information, secondly it is consultation. And then there is cooperation, such as research and technology transfer”⁷¹.

Moreover, sometimes government agencies and ministries use NGOs to strengthen their position in relation to other agencies and ministries. Thomas Johnson (2009) describes how the State Environmental Protection Agency (now Ministry of Environmental Protection) has occasionally allied itself with NGOs to improve its position vis-à-vis other state agencies. The government therefore does not consider civil society as necessarily nongovernmental and confrontational, but rather considers it as potentially useful. Indeed, the Ministry of Civil Affairs’ registry describes organizations as ‘social organizations’ (*shehui tuanti*), instead of ‘nongovernmental organizations’ (*feizhengfu zuzhi*) underscoring the functional attributes of these organizations, rather than their position towards the government. The role of NGOs is effectively framed into a political neutral one:

“People don’t talk much about civil society in China. They talk about charity, poverty alleviation, social organizations which will do some kind of [charity work], for instance [with] disabled people, poor people, minorities sometimes, migrant

⁷¹ Interview with Ye Ronghua, officer at the State Forestry Administration and co-director of NFMP, Beijing, 24 March 2010.

workers. The state does not really approve of political groups and human rights groups, because the state says there is no need for that. But that is of course not really true”⁷².

In quite a similar fashion, NGOs are also self-defining themselves by their functional additionality vis-à-vis government agencies. NGOs fashion themselves as contributors in the implementation of central government policies. For instance, Aster Li, director of Conservation International’s China office, states that

“legislators and policy-makers issue laws and legislation, but [do not know] how to effectively implement. [...] I don’t think only government can implement this well, you also need monitoring from the outside, some NGOs to do some pilots. NGO monitoring pilots are very important. So this part of the work civil society can do”⁷³.

Rather than political campaigners, NGOs regard themselves as neutral partners who complement government efforts to achieve social harmony. This is especially the case in environmental issues, where the confluence of societal changes in the form of rapid industrialization and urbanization has sharpened clashes between communities, local governments and industry. NGOs position themselves between local communities and business, as professional intermediaries. According to Li Bo

⁷² Interview with Dorit Lehrack.

⁷³ Interview with Aster Li.

“we need more of us, professional NGOs who can be conflict resolving bodies, neutral; who stand between business and communities. We need intermediary bodies that actually can talk to both, and see where there’s actually some area where you can work together and where you cannot.”⁷⁴

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I investigated the influence of UN summits and transnational interactions on (the conditions for) partnerships in China’s sustainable development governance. I specifically focused on two questions: whether UN processes led to the emergence of partnerships in China, and, whether transnational interactions have led to conditions that are more conducive for partnership governance, i.e. a generalized pattern of governance which regularly involves the association of transnational and public actors to collaborate on common objectives. I approached these questions from two theoretical understandings of partnerships. From an institutionalist perspective partnerships can be regarded as the latest addition to an increasingly comprehensive system of global sustainable development governance. In the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process, partnerships are seen as an instrument to achieve better implementation of internationally agreed outcomes. In contrast, the transnationalist perspective of partnerships emphasizes the self-organization, and self-definition by

⁷⁴ Interview with Li Bo.

transnational actors, in particular business and civil society organizations, without necessarily referring to internationally agreed outcomes. At UN summits and in UN processes references are made to both perspectives of partnerships. This raises the question whether the emergence of partnerships and partnership governance it is a consequence of institutionalization of partnerships in global governance, or whether UN processes merely acknowledge the emergence of partnerships in a transnational setting.

The institutionalization of partnerships in the UN system, and the adoption of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development scheme as an official outcome to the 2002 WSSD have been of very limited influence on the emergence of new partnerships in China's sustainable development. Rather, global partnerships regard China as an implementation context to achieve targets and time frames. Very few Partnerships for Sustainable Development promote partnerships as an institutional arrangement or an alternative form of governance. Moreover, China has not been particularly eager to consent to the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. The relatively high number of partnerships that implement in China typically seem to involve only one Chinese partner. They generally do not build a local/national partnership networks. Consequently, Partnerships for Sustainable Development do not provide a model for partnerships in China. However, the influence of transnational interactions and cross-sectoral interactions on China's transnational actors seem to be quite significant. While not directly resulting in partnerships, these interactions have been used by civil society actors to gain more independence, knowledge and capacity to play a greater role in

China's sustainable development. The influence of transnational interactions is difficult to qualify, but conditions seem to have improved for partnership governance, in particular in the relation between international NGOs and domestic NGOs, between NGOs and business, and between NGOs and government.

The very limited effects of the institutionalization of partnerships on the emergence of partnerships, and the significant influence of transnational interactions on China's transnational actors cast as critical light on UN sustainable development processes, and on large UN summits. In the appraisal of these processes a focus on official outcomes and institutions may mask the influence of transnational interactions which change the conditions for civil society, especially in the relatively controlled environment of China's authoritarian governance. Transnational interactions have changed the viability of partnerships as instruments in governance. They helped to enable a context in China that is more suitable for various types of partnerships, and they strengthened the position of some NGOs. While many feel disappointment over the latest editions of large UN sustainable development conferences (and other UN processes, e.g. climate conferences) because they deliver few new international commitments and build few new global governance institutions, the processes should also be appraised by their transnational effects. Asked whether it would be better (for China) not to have these conferences, a Chinese NGO delegate resolutely answers:

“No, no, of course you need these conferences. The conference is not only governments. It's a place where many

people can come together. Governments may not find agreement, but many other people agree on what needs to happen. They offer many solutions, and you don't always need to have governments to agree.”⁷⁵

List of interviews Chapter 5

- Jan Pronk, special UN envoy to the WSSD, The Hague, 21 April 2008.
- Zehra Aydin, member of organizing team of WSSD, New York, 17 May 2008.
- NGO delegate at the 2002 WSSD, Beijing, 21 March 2011.
- Dorit Lehrack, organizer of the 2002 Chinese NGO Delegation at the 2002 WSSD, Beijing, 21 March 2012.
- Lina Li, officer at Greenovation Hub, Beijing, 11 July 2012.
- Yang Fangyi, officer at Shanshui Conservation Center, Beijing, 20 August 2012.
- Ma Jun, director of IPE, Beijing, 15 August 2012.
- Li Bo, director of Friends of Nature, 15 August 2012.
- Magnus Gislev, head of Environment department, EU delegation, Beijing, 3 June 2009.
- Patrick Schroeder, international officer at CANGO, Beijing, 4 July 2012.
- Ye Ronghua, officer at the State Forestry Administration and co-director of NFMP, Beijing, 24 March 2010.

⁷⁵ Interview with Patrick Schroeder.

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- Aster Li, Conservation International China Programme director, Beijing, 7 September 2009.

6 Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China: Adaptation of a Global Governance Instrument⁷⁶

Hybrid governance instruments such as public-private partnerships are increasingly applied in so-called emerging countries, in particular Brazil, India and China (the 'BRIC countries'). With a more diverse set of influential political actors involved in global governance, the question arises whether existing global governance institutions are effective and legitimate.

This paper focuses on partnerships in China's sustainable development. China has witnessed a rapid economic transition from a plan economy to a market economy. In the course of this transition, China is facing increasing ecological stress and social inequity. Reform and intensification of China's sustainable development governance seems necessary. Are partnerships the road to go? Does China successfully appropriate the partnership model and integrate it into its domestic governance? This chapter discusses how Partnerships for Sustainable Development were brokered at the 2002 Worlds Summit for Sustainable Development,

⁷⁶ This chapter is based on an earlier publication: Chan, Sander (2009) Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China: Adaptation of a Global Governance Instrument. *European Journal for East Asian Studies*, vol. 8, is. 1, p. 121-153.

in spite of initial resistance by developing countries; and whether a prevalent partnership model is emerging in China.

6.1 Background

Partnerships for sustainable development can refer to a generic and broad category of collaborative institutional arrangements. However, this chapter specifically focuses on Partnerships for Sustainable Development, coined at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (WSSD). These partnerships were defined as “specific commitments by various partners intended to contribute and reinforce the implementation of the outcomes of the intergovernmental negotiations of the WSSD (Programme of Action and Political Declaration) and to help achieve the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals” (Kara and Quarless 2002). Partnerships for Sustainable Development are registered with the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD).

The political significance of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process rests on the fact that, for the first time, voluntary, participatory implementation arrangements were presented as an official outcome of an intergovernmental process. In political terms this means partnerships entered the stage as an instrument of international relations, not unlike international treaties and regimes. This event also raised critical voices about the possible substitution of binding intergovernmental agreements by partnerships (SDIN 2002). Also, the legitimacy and effectiveness of

the partnership model have been questioned (see Biermann et al. 2007, Andonova and Levy 2003). These critical comments are supported by the lack of clarity about what partnerships actually constitute. A closer look at the Partnerships for Sustainable Development guidelines (see Kara and Quarless 2002) does not clarify how partnerships should look like, who takes part in them, which issues of sustainable development should be addressed, the geographic and Thematic scopes of partnerships, and funding mechanism. This relatively open formulation can be regarded as a discursive settlement of considerable diplomatic bickering behind the scenes (see Chapter 3 and Mert 2009). Some delegations were very favorable to the idea of partnerships as an official outcome. Most notably, the United States tried to push the idea of partnerships to avoid new binding sustainable development targets while showcasing 'best practices'. The general lack of interest for new international commitments on sustainable development by the US administration became apparent when President George W. Bush decided not to attend the WSSD, the largest UN summit to date. Other supporters of the partnership process included the European Union, Canada, Japan and – to a lesser extent – South Africa and Indonesia (respectively hosts of the WSSD and the WSSD preparatory processes). The EU was more inclined to see partnerships as an addition to new binding intergovernmental accords. The EU also proposed a more exclusive registration process for partnerships at the United Nations and the requirement for regular monitoring, but such clearer conceptualization of the partnerships process was rejected by the US. Developing countries' delegations, in particular

the G77 and China, did not receive the idea of partnerships with much enthusiasm. In a series of interviews conducted over the course of two years, at the UNCSD meetings of 2007 and 2008, we could find at least three reasons for this reticence.

- The threat of losing of bilateral funds or the possibility to accrue new development aid funds.
- A shifting focus away from social and economic dimensions of sustainable development to ecological concerns.
- The empowered role of the international business and tors in domestic politics, to the detriment of state actors.

Ad 1. The WSSD was dubbed 'implementation summit'. The underlying assumption⁷⁷ was that there is no lack of international agreements to address problems of sustainable development; instead, the 'real' problem is a lack of implementation. Partnerships were suggested as an implementation instrument. Partnerships would attract additional private resources from business and charity organizations, and other resources and capacities would be pooled for a better achievement of sustainable development. However, the G77 and China were concerned that partnerships would act as an alternative channel for public, bilateral funds, leaving the receiving states with less resources and control over domestic sustainable development issues.

Ad 2. The concept of sustainable development either assumes a harmonious co-development of nature and man, or, it masks

⁷⁷ Or convenient political formulation.

inherent conflict. Without further considering this question here, it suffices to observe that some delegations from industrialized countries stressed the ecological pillar of sustainable development while many developing countries prioritized further economic development. Partnerships, in this regard, could shift the balance towards ecological concerns, since most (prospective) partners, such as NGOs and multinational corporations, are from the developed 'North'.

Ad 3. The potential to involve multiple stakeholders and leverage skills and resources are generally positively evaluated by Northern state actors. However, to some developing state governments, the participatory dimension of partnerships represented a threat. The linking of transnational NGOs and businesses with domestic actors could erode state control over civil society. Especially (semi-) authoritarian regimes like China and Russia find the idea of foreign partners helping local NGOs and possibly even oppositional social groups objectionable.

Given these objections, the agreement on partnerships as an intergovernmental outcome seems a remarkable accomplishment. A closer survey of China's stance and a review of the outcome of the partnerships process in China can clarify the question why the partnerships process was adopted.

6.2 China in the WSSD process

The three objections outlined in the previous section also applied to the Chinese government delegation when they initially opposed the

idea of partnerships as an official outcome. Nonetheless, China eventually agreed, along with the G77.

The agreement on the partnership process was partly due to sustained efforts by the UN bureau in charge of the organization of the WSSD. For instance, the bureau members intervened when fierce US support for partnerships met suspicion with other delegations. According to a member of the WSSD bureau “We had to tell the US delegation not to do it anymore”⁷⁸. With regard to China, initial resistance prompted the WSSD bureau to hold meetings to convince the delegation that China could well profit from the process. The increasing presence of Chinese NGOs at UN summits, could unlock partnership funds with foreign social organizations, governments and business. Indeed, the Summit was attended by the largest Chinese NGO delegation at an intergovernmental meeting to that date⁷⁹. The presence of a Chinese social organization with good relations to the Chinese environmental bureaucracy, the China Association for NGO Cooperation (CANGO), brought in capacity and experience to deal

⁷⁸ Interview with Ms. Zehra Aydin, senior program officer at United Nations Environment Programme, member of the WSSD bureau. UN HQ New York, 15 May 2008.

⁷⁹ The large nongovernmental representation from China may seem remarkable; China’s restrictions on social organization are notorious. Even in the preparatory phase of the WSSD, China successfully resisted the accreditation of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT 2002). A WSSD bureau member recalled that the Chinese government delegation was very informed about all the Chinese NGOs present in the WSSD process. The level of oversight and organization is a result of longstanding domestic governance links between government and social organizations. For instance, the Ministry for Civil Affairs officially supervises one of the largest Chinese NGOs present at the WSSD, the China Association of NGOs (CANGO). Official state or government agency support is a requirement for any NGO to be officially registered in China. Therefore every Chinese NGO is in fact a governmentally organized NGO or GONGO.

with partnerships. With – at the time - almost twenty years of experience linking foreign NGOs with local Chinese NGOs, CANGO was (and remains) a spider in China's web of environmental civil society⁸⁰. This increased capacity may have contributed to China's change of thought and its support for Partnerships for Sustainable Development as an official outcome of the WSSD.

In the run-up to the WSSD it also became clear that few or no binding targets and timetables would be agreed upon, not in the last instance because of US resistance; partnerships would possibly be the only significant and – more important – visible outcome of the WSSD. At the Summit itself, the partnerships regime⁸¹ was not entirely settled upon and still open for renegotiation, but post-WSSD negotiations did not clarify or delineate guidelines for partnerships. Jan Pronk, special UN envoy to the WSSD, recalled that the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process lost momentum soon after the WSSD, and that the guidelines were deliberately loosely formulated and barely renegotiated so it was easy to agree on very little⁸². According to a WSSD bureau member, what was formally agreed upon as the official outcome was the list of partnerships that had been registered at the time of the WSSD. In other words, the set of

⁸⁰ Even when CANGO does not regularly employ 'partnership' as a discourse for intersectoral and interorganizational collaboration, in a personal interview, 9 December 2008, a CANGO spokesman clearly presented CANGO as a partnerships broker.

⁸¹ Formally, Partnerships for Sustainable Development are not an international regime. However, as a set of closely linked initiatives relating to the implementation of international regimes, 'regime' can be used to describe the partnerships for sustainable development process.

⁸² Interview with Jan Pronk, Special UN Envoy to the WSSD, 21 April 2008, Institute for Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, Netherlands.

partnerships that count as formal outcomes is very limited. “If you would really push governments against the wall, they could say they never agreed to the partnerships process”⁸³. This limited institutional settlement of the partnership process allowed for every delegation to have its own interpretation on what it agreed to. The so-called ‘Bali guidelines’ (Kara and Quarless 2002), in spite of its name, provided few directions on how a partnership should look like; how it should be organized or monitored, neither were requirements set for the registration of partnerships at the UNCSD (see Chapter 5). Partnerships and collaborating partners could easily get a ‘UN stamp’ to gain credibility for their activities.

Within the G77 especially South Africa and Indonesia (hosts to the WSSD process) were pressured to have Partnerships for Sustainable Development as visible outcomes to the WSSD, to prevent total failure of the much publicized Summit. On the other hand, developing countries were promised additional investments partly channeled through partnerships; for instance, a 970 million USD investment in water and sanitation (Mwanza 2005)).

In sum, funding opportunities, WSSD bureau support, and – paradoxically – the lost momentum and a vague formulation of the partnerships process, led to the adoption of the process even by governments that initially were opposed, among them the Chinese government.

⁸³ Interview with Zehra Aydin.

6.3 Constraints to partnerships in China

The open formulation and the voluntary nature of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process allowed for much interpretative room to maneuver for governments to decide whether and how to get involved with partnerships. It could be expected that in China, partnership activity would be effectively curbed by a number of domestic constraints.

In China the emergence of partnerships has been significantly constrained. In sustainable development partnership arrangements are fairly new and uncommon (Turner 2003). In the heavily regulated field of social organizations there is limited autonomy vis-à-vis the state. Subsequently, it is unlikely that partnerships would emerge at the same rate and with the same form and substance in China as in the West. Another institutional constraint seems to be the relative lack of experience with collaborative types of governance. Partnerships in China often have an experimental character; they are short term and have a limited thematic scope. In comparison to public-private partnerships in the OECD world, Chinese partnerships seem to have a shorter running time (e.g. Adams, Young, and Zhihong 2006). This is a significant difference because long-term arrangements have more institutional consequences for state bureaucracies than short-term arrangements. According to Adams et al., the short term focus of Chinese partnerships indicates that the arrangement is often regarded as a budgetary 'quick fix' to make up for shortages in investment capital (2006, 388). They also argue that partnerships still do not constitute a substantial part of China's

governance. One structural factor that severely constrains the development of partnerships is the historical institutional context they develop in. The coincidence of the development of market institutions and public-private partnerships in China means that the legal and organizational context is in a constant flux. For instance, the protection of private asset ownership was only recently codified in a constitutional amendment. The fast changing legal and organizational environment results in additional risks for partnerships. The issue of ownership remains a crucial impediment to the formation of partnerships in China (Brown, Orr, and Lou 2006). Moreover, when partnerships are implemented locally; policies and procedures are often revised to meet local demands, adding to the risk for (private) parties to enter partnerships. Partnerships including NGOs meet even more impediments. Civil society is severely constrained in China, with the government requiring a difficult registration procedure and government patronage. This restriction potentially undercuts the rationale for many partnerships, since increased participation and prior consultation have been associated with better implementation, and NGOs supposedly render legitimacy and credibility.

In addition to the institutional constraints there are also cultural barriers to partnerships. Traditional kinship relations ('guanxi') dilute the distinction between the public and the private (Wong, Tjosvold, and Yu 2005). On the one hand this can be conducive to the emergence of partnerships, since ties are already latent and guanxi ties represent (social) capital (Wank 1996). However, partnerships resulting from guanxi networks are also likely suffer from a lack of

transparency, with only a thin line drawn between corruption and loyalty (Adams, Young, and Zhihong 2006, 395). The bureaucratic state poses additional cultural and capability constraints to partnerships. In a survey among government middle managers, Peter Koehn found that they generally lacked the 'transnational capacity' to act and connect in an intercultural (international, intersectoral) environment. Therefore, "findings are not encouraging" (Koehn 2007, 262) for Chinese officials to partner with non-Chinese firms, and the private sector. Although some scholars detect increasing associational activity (Unger 1996), the emergence of partnerships in China is still severely constrained. This has led to considerable pessimism in regard to the potential of partnerships, "without major reforms, which will take a very long time, this constraint is likely to be a binding one on the future development of PPP in China" (Adams, Young, and Zhihong 2006, 393). This pessimism regarding partnerships in China stands in stark contrast with the strong belief displayed by IOs, the UN in particular. For instance, the UN Development Assistance Framework for China 2006-2010 explicitly promotes partnerships involving civil society and greater public participation (UN 2006b, 14, 19) and sees partnerships as a means for "strengthening China's multilateralism" (UN 2006b, 20). The relative high proportion of Partnerships for Sustainable Development active in China also reflects the priority that the UN attach to partnerships in China. This UN priority for partnerships poses a paradox in the light of the discussed constraints. On the one hand, partnerships are not an integrated part of China's governance; since there are too many constraints, on the other hand, partnerships in

China are fairly well represented among UN registered partnerships (55 out of 341 partnerships registered with the UNCSD in July 2008 reported activities in China).

6.4 Adapting the partnership model

The partnership process may be adapted domestically to better correspond with local and national priorities. Such adjustment could also account for the paradox: China does not constitute an enabling environment for partnerships, yet many Partnerships for Sustainable Development are active in China. To assess whether the partnership model has been adjusted to better fit the Chinese context, we have a closer look at the set of 55 partnerships registered with the UNCSD. Data was collected in the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database (GSPD), developed at the Institute for Environmental Studies of VU University Amsterdam.

Without aiming at a comprehensive overview of all possible modes of adjustment, I point to the most common modes found in the set of partnerships in China: adjustment of the participatory constellation within partnerships; the geographic scope of partnership activities; thematic scope; and the function of partnerships in domestic governance for sustainable development.

6.4.1 Participatory scope

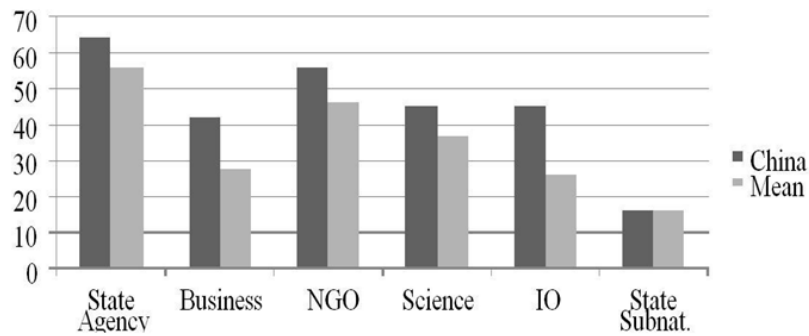


Figure 6.1 Participation in partnerships by actor type

The guidelines for Partnerships for Sustainable Development do not indicate which should be the partners involved in a partnership arrangement. The partnerships registered with the UNCSO show a wide array of possible partner constellations, ranging from partnerships solely consisting of government partners to multi-sectoral constellations. Given the constraints for civil society, the participation of Chinese NGOs in partnerships is low. Although many scholars pointed out Chinese NGOs are on the rise, many of them are not registered and therefore cannot enter into contractual relations. If NGOs participate, it would often occur through a government hosting institution, making it difficult to discern whether a partner is an NGO or a branch of government. No Chinese NGOs are involved in the set of 55 partnerships, although it is difficult to tell whether some of the research organizations involved actually act as NGOs. That is not to say NGOs are absent in partnerships in China, in fact the

number of foreign NGO partners still result in an above average participation of NGOs in partnerships in China (Figure 6.1). The large stake of international partners in partnerships in China is furthermore witnessed in the high participation of International Organizations such as the United Nations, the Asia Development Bank and the World Bank. Foreign partners, NGOs and International Organizations clearly taking a leading position in China's Partnerships for Sustainable Development landscape.

6.4.2 Geographic scope

The partnership model in China is also adapted in terms of geographic scope. Most of the partnerships active in China have a global or regional scope (Figure 6.2). Since partnerships are not embedded in China's domestic governance, activities in China are often part of a larger set of activities worldwide. Partnership activities are more likely to emerge in areas where interaction with foreign partners is most dense, in the case of China: the urban East coast. This pattern of emergence does not necessarily coincide with functional needs in China's sustainable development. There are some notable exceptions. Two partnerships (the 'Sino-Italian Partnership' and the 'Critical Ecosystems Partnerships Fund') report activities in China's South West, Tibet, and Inner Mongolia. These cases are particularly interesting, because China is very concerned about (foreign) partnership activities in so-called minority regions. Further studies would be instructive for a better understanding of the interaction between government, NGOs and foreign partners in China's authoritarian context.

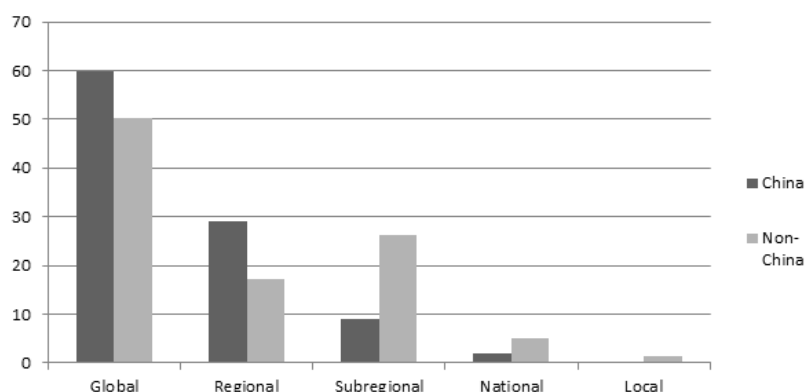


Figure 6.2 Partnerships geographic scope

In terms of the geography of administration, most partnerships that claim to be implementing in China are not actually based in there. Partnerships are usually administered by foreign-based secretariats. The typical partnership active in China has a very broad geographical scope. A remarkable 90 per cent of the partnerships are not exclusively implementing in China, rather they administer other projects in the region or globally. This is a clear indication that partnerships are still a foreign phenomenon in China, initiated and led by foreign partners, and brokered in the global rather than domestic settings.

6.4.3 Thematic scope

In terms of topics addressed by partnerships, the pattern reflects China's policy priorities. The quest for energy security is reflected in a relatively large number of partnerships in the energy sector (20 per cent of all Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China). This is

a sign that China is successful at attracting resources for the problems it is most concerned about. The high proportion of knowledge partnerships (25 per cent) relates to the high number of research partners in partnerships implementing in China. The structural reason behind this may be the fact that knowledge sharing is relatively politically uncontroversial. Moreover, it contributes to China's catching up in sustainable development policies, and technology and science for sustainable development.

6.4.4 The function of partnerships in China's sustainable development

Partnerships are still a new phenomenon and most partnerships in China are not really Chinese, leading partners are not Chinese; partnerships are not administered in China; partnerships hardly contribute to higher involvement of civil society actors. If Chinese partnerships are not really Chinese, are they merely political smoke screens, to pretend that China is contributing to global sustainable development? To assess whether there is more to partnerships than their political use, the Partnerships for Sustainable Development research project at VU University Amsterdam gathered data on output (for instance publications, infrastructure, consultancy service, workshops and conferences, etcetera) in the GSPD for all partnerships registered with the UNCSD. The difference in output between partnerships implementing in China and other partnerships are remarkable. 90 Per cent of partnerships active in China produced output, which compares rather favorably to the 58 per cent of

partnerships not implementing in China. Moreover, we assessed whether the outputs fit the functions of the partnerships (see Figure 6.3), for example whether a partnership pertaining education actually produced training materials and/or organized seminars and classes. Such fit between function and expected output ('function-output fit') was relatively high among partnerships implementing in China. 8r Per cent of partnerships implementing in China has a partial or full function-output fit, compared to 57 per cent of the total sample of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Therefore, Partnerships in China seem to be relatively productive, one might even say successful.

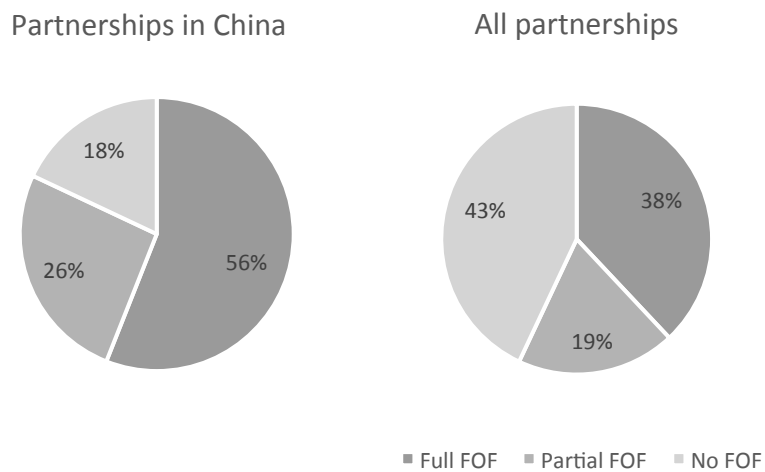


Figure 6.3 Fit between partnership functions and output

Partnerships in China seem to provide foreign partners with many opportunities for productive partnerships. China's relatively well functioning government and developed infrastructure may constitute a relatively suitable environment for effective implementation Some

partnerships even choose to withdraw from other developing countries to focus on China and a few other emerging countries⁸⁴. High economic growth and a large consumer market, also provides business opportunities. Corporations like Caterpillar Inc. (Methane to Markets Partnership), Shell (Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles), and Iveco (Sino-Italian Cooperation Program for Environmental Protection towards Sustainable Development) have all profited from activities developed through Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China.

Not only business finds partnerships in China attractive. The US government, for instance, is involved in many of the partnerships in China (CLASP – Collaborative Labeling and Appliance Standards Program, Methane to Markets, Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles, Partnership for Clean Indoor Air, PEPS – Promoting an Energy-efficient Public Sector, REEEP – Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership). For China, partnerships also provide opportunities, even when it has not (yet) adopted partnership as an integral part of domestic governance for sustainable development. Partnerships bring side-payments, such as foreign investments, that are further stimulated by the showcasing of the productivity and relative success of existing partnerships. It seems that individual partnerships have much potential in China, even when they are not an integrated part of China's domestic sustainable development or environmental governance.

⁸⁴ Interview by Kacper Szulecki, member of our research project team, with Binu Parthan, Deputy Director -Programme coordinator for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership. REEEP secretariat, Vienna, 2 April 2008.

In sum, Chinese partnerships are not really Chinese when closer observed, rather Chinese activities represent only a small proportion of most partnership activities and partnership are administered by foreign partners. Yet, this does not mean that partnerships in China are merely political tools and showcases. Rather the relative success of partnerships in China indicates that individual partnerships in China have potential.

6.5 Conclusion

The strong advocacy for partnership governance in sustainable development by some countries and by international organizations has led to the promulgation of such arrangements across the globe. For partnership advocates, the 2002 WSSD stands as a milestone. Governments agreed to partnerships as an outcome of intergovernmental negotiations for the first time. As a result many Partnerships for Sustainable Development have been initiated in developing and emerging countries. 55 of the 431 registered partnerships in July 2008 claimed to implement projects in China. Since partnerships in China's sustainable development are a relatively new phenomenon, the questions should be raised whether partnerships in China are effective instruments, and whether the partnership arrangement is effectively adapted to the domestic context.

The fact that China accepted the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process as an outcome of an intergovernmental process may seem remarkable. China has little experience with

partnerships and is also worried about getting (some) civil society actors involved in policy making and implementation. However, the brief analysis in this chapter also shows the partnerships process was weakly defined, deliberately vaguely formulated and multi-interpretable. Not only did this facilitate the adoption of the partnerships process, it also left ample room to adapt the partnership model to fit domestic circumstances. In the case of China, we see a prevalent model for partnerships emerging. Most partnerships in China have a constellation with many foreign actors, without domestic NGOs; they are administered abroad; have a global or regional scopes and mostly focus on issues like capacity building, knowledge exchange and energy security. Is this prevalent model a successful appropriation of the partnership model?

Yes and no. Yes, because individual partnerships can be quite productive in China, producing more function relevant output than partnerships not active in China. It seems to make sense for partnerships to be active in China. Not only are there urgent problems of sustainable development; a relatively developed infrastructure and stable government impact positively on the chances for partnerships to deliver. However, in spite of the optimism about the chances for individual partnerships, China has not made partnerships a structural part of its governance for sustainable development. Apart from fundamental critiques of the partnership practice, discourse and politics, the bottom line is that partnerships are still largely a foreign venture in China. Even if partnerships 'work' there is scant evidence that 'best practices' are

scaled up, or lead to more fundamental reforms in China's sustainable development governance.

List of interviews Chapter 6

- Ms. Zehra Aydin, senior program officer at United Nations Environment Programme, member of the WSSD bureau. UN HQ New York, 15 May 2008.
- Jan Pronk, Special UN Envoy to the WSSD, Institute for Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, Netherlands, 21 April 2008.
- Binu Parthan, Deputy Director -Programme coordinator for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership. REEEP secretariat, Vienna, 2 April 2008.

7 Partnerships for Sustainable Development Beyond the OECD: Partnership Governance in China and India compared⁸⁵

7.1 Background

Partnerships for Sustainable Development, introduced at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, represent a large-scale diffusion of partnerships as a governance instrument beyond the OECD context. However, the introduction of Partnerships for Sustainable Development beyond the OECD context does not necessarily entail a convergence of governance approaches and practices among developing countries. To which extent global governance instruments such as Partnerships for Sustainable Development influence domestic governance practices remains unclear. This chapter discusses Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China and India. Together, these two countries have been referred to as the “Asian drivers of global change” (Messner and Humphrey 2006, Kaplinsky and Messner 2008, Humphrey and Messner 2009), implying that they have become more than mere

⁸⁵ This chapter has been published as a book chapter: Chan (2009) Partnerships for Sustainable Development beyond the OECD: Partnership governance in China and India compared. Chapter 6 in: Philipp Pattberg, Frank Biermann, Sander Chan, Aysem Mert (2012) Public Private Partnerships for Sustainable Development: Emergence, Influence and Legitimacy. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, p. 115-136.

subjects in global governance; instead they are increasingly shaping the architecture and the outcomes of global governance. China and India have even been seen as countervailing powers to current processes of (neoliberal) globalization (Bhattacharya and Bhattacharya 2006). The application of partnerships to sustainable development in these countries, therefore, does not necessarily represent a case of domestic adoption of global governance instruments, and much less an imposition of governance norms by Western donors. Rather, the Asian drivers increasingly have the capacity to adapt global governance instruments to better suit their domestic governance systems or even to challenge the premises and instruments of global governance.

In addition to the policy relevance of analyzing Asian drivers in global governance, there are also methodological considerations for a comparative analysis of public-private partnerships in India and China. The Asian drivers share many characteristics: they are the most and second most populous countries in the world; both are emerging world powers; both are leaving behind a past of low development and poverty; both have abandoned planning as the primary method of economic coordination in favor of markets; both experience rapid economic growth. While sharing characteristics, Asian drivers, however, represent very different political systems, featuring different state-society relations and different structures of civil society. A comparison between India and China allows for an assessment of political and institutional contexts as key explanatory factors in the implementation and organization of Partnerships for Sustainable Development beyond the OECD.

In the following section, I discuss global assumptions about governance and partnerships, the distinct drivers and movers in global governance, the influence of global governance on domestic governance, and finally the specific cases of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China and India. This chapter with an assessment of the constraints and the potential of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in the Chinese and Indian contexts. For the empirical assessment in this chapter the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database was used along with specific datasets for the samples of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China and India.

7.2 Global assumptions about governance and partnerships

Industrialized countries have been generally more supportive of adopting partnerships as instruments in global sustainable development. Partnerships in these countries had been part of domestic governance for a long time. To some degree, the partnerships regime that emerged from the WSSD reflects the preferences, norms and practices of OECD countries. Partnership governance in the OECD area emerged as a result of political, societal and economic developments. The turn towards partnership governance was sometimes part of political campaigns to restructure government, for instance under the 'New Right' governments of the UK and the US in the 1980s. A broader public management paradigm emerged throughout the OECD area: the New Public Management, in

which partnerships were instrumental (Hood 1991; Savas 2000). Moreover, people throughout the OECD area experienced an extended period of peace and economic growth leading to higher expectations towards public service provision and higher tax-consciousness, demanding budget discipline and more efficient services (cf. Hood and Schuppert 1988, 250-252, Hood 1991). Coupled with a widely shared sentiment that large state-controlled public sectors are inefficient and ineffective, this led to increasing pressure for government reform and the adoption of alternative governance approaches that embody less hierarchical, more participatory and slimmer alternatives to traditional government. Partnerships are one manifestation of this drive towards alternative government, as they complement and at times even substitute government by including nongovernmental stakeholders, such as NGOs, business and science organizations in decision making and policy implementation. As drivers of global governance, OECD countries also shape international institutions and instruments (e.g. Krasner 1991, Mattli and Büthe. 2003). Drawing from their experience at home, these OECD countries replicated their norms and practices of governance into global governance; while international organizations such as the UN and the World Bank played intermediating roles in the transposition of these instruments beyond the OECD.

In the case of non-OECD countries, the connection between domestic economic, societal and political developments and the emergence of partnership governance is not always apparent. While partnerships have been advocated by international organizations, and have been

introduced through development projects, partnerships do not necessarily become part of domestic governance. In other words: individual partnership projects exist quite isolated from other domestic institutions and policies, and they do not amount to the regular use of partnerships as a means of governance (see Chapter 6). It is hardly surprising that developing countries expressed worries during the WSSD negotiation process, since partnerships are not mere implementation instruments, but also carriers of governance norms which are not necessarily compatible with domestic practices. For instance, Partnerships for Sustainable Development assume vibrant civil societies and strong nongovernmental actors that can handle assistance funds channeled outside of governmental relations. This alternative channeling of funds and resources was viewed with suspicion by some governments, as they feared Western interference into their societal development. However, to describe the introduction of partnerships beyond the OECD as a case of imposition by foreign donors and international organizations would be a tenuous generalization. First, facing questions of sustainable development, governments beyond the OECD also look for 'best practices' and alternative governance methods. Moreover, nongovernmental actors in developing countries are also learning from, and connecting with, their counterparts abroad (see Chapter 5). Second, governments do not fear the mere existence of partnerships within their borders, since partnerships per se do not necessarily amount to partnership governance; rather individual partnerships can exist isolated from national institutions and policies. For instance, they can take the form of (short-term) projects with

very limited effect in terms of scale and policy reform. Whether partnerships in developing countries amount to partnership governance will depend on the fit between partnerships and domestic governance, i.e. the compatibility of new global governance instruments, such as partnerships, with domestic governance. For example, an established rule of law creates a stable and contractual environment conducive to the formation of partnerships. Moreover, freedom of association allows for nongovernmental actors to form alliances and to actively engage in policy making and implementation. Moreover, governments that lack capacity and budget may seek to forge partnerships to leverage resources from third parties.

As partnerships are introduced into the Chinese and Indian contexts, they are also confronted with existing institutions of domestic governance. The compatibility between structural developments, the partnership practice and government reform often found in the OECD context is more ambiguous here. Partnerships have been put forward by international organizations and consultants as an instrument for public service reform, alongside privatization, subcontracting and decentralization. According to some observers, partnerships are instrumental in the extension of neoliberalization governance (beyond the OECD) (Miraftab 2004a, Van der Wel 2004). However, the transposition of the partnerships as neoliberal expansion would suggest a close concurrence between social, political and economic developments and the emergence of partnerships. In practice, the role of international organizations, foreign governments and consultants in the introduction of

partnerships beyond the OECD can hardly be discounted (Chan 2009). The WSSD process is a case in point. While developing countries were skeptical of the introduction of partnerships as an official outcome of the WSSD, fearing substitution of bi- and multilateral development assistance, industrialized countries, including the United States, the European Union, Canada, Japan along with the World Bank and major corporations – readily suggested partnerships as new and innovative governance instruments. The application of partnerships beyond the OECD may therefore be a projection of the desires and the worldviews of these ‘first-mover’ actors onto global sustainable development governance, rather than a response to domestic gaps in governance in developing countries. Indeed, many of the partnerships registered at the UNCSD seem to be predominantly promotional efforts with no apparent demand for them (Andonova and Levy 2003). Partnerships in developing countries may be more responsive to foreign governments, international NGOs and international organizations than to the governments and citizens of the developing countries they operate in. However, rather than generalizing for all developing countries, it is important to acknowledge that the potential for partnership governance in sustainable development will vary by country and by respective political, societal and economic contexts.

7.3 China and India

China and India represent cases of Asian drivers, but they are also second-movers in global governance (Mattli and Büthe. 2003). In

global governance, their influence on global institutions used to be rather limited, while they cope with a set of global governance institutions that have historically been shaped by OECD countries. The gap between global governance and domestic governance has widened through distinct historical pathways between the Asian drivers and the OECD. For instance, both India and China have relied on planning and central coordination rather than on market coordination. However, both countries embarked on a far-reaching transition towards market economy, resulting in rapid economic growth and also increasing political influence on the world stage. In the course of these developments, the Asian drivers have become more compatible with governance models employed in the OECD. However, to which extent China and India have adapted their domestic governance of sustainable development to global governance remains an open question. A comparison between the two countries is of particular interest because substantial differences continue to exist notwithstanding the fact that they have often been grouped together⁸⁶.

In terms of civil society, there are significant distinctions between China and India, with varying levels of autonomy and influence *vis-à-vis* the government. India is known to accommodate a vibrant civil society, supported by a long tradition of rule of law introduced under the British colonial rule. Civil society development continued under

⁸⁶ For example, the respective governments are increasingly regarded as leaders of the developing world (Payne 2010) and have even been referred to as 'Chindia' (Ramesh 2005). Despite these groupings, as stated above, marked differences between the two Asian drivers are present in terms of civil society development, political freedom, and rule of law.

post-colonial modernization, although suffering temporary setbacks, such as during the emergency rule imposed in 1975 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi when restrictions were put on civil society. Nonetheless, civil society continued to widen, for instance through caste solidarity systems. It should be noted that autonomy and influence of civil society organizations are relative notions. For instance, the Indian government exerts strong influence over NGOs and civil society by controlling registration which is necessary for foreign funding of NGOs (Jalali 2008). In recent years, Hindu nationalists have animated a more homogeneous Indian political community, disregarding communitarian organization among religious and ethnic minorities. Nonetheless, while not free from political interference and government restrictions, Indian civil society enjoys relative autonomy under a democratic constitution, supported by a relatively stable legal framework for social organization.

On the contrary, Chinese civil society is notorious for its constraints. Some even argue that there is no real or mature civil society (Lai 2006)). In modern history the Communist Party of China (CPC) has monopolized the social and political spheres, leaving room for only CPC related mass organizations. Prerevolutionary social movements and groups were either absorbed into the CPC and its affiliated organizations, or they were abandoned. Without a doubt, China has come a long way since liberalization started under Deng Xiaoping despite regular setbacks like in 1989. While China's civil society is still restricted and the state and the CPC remain entangled in a pervasive party-state, there is room to maneuver for social organizations,

NGOs and other non-state actors. Since 1978, the grip of the party-state eased, allowing a spectacular growth in the numbers of NGOs and social organizations. In 2007, the total number of nongovernmental organizations reached nearly 410,000. Some estimates are even much higher (Wang and Liu. 2009). However, the numerical rise of NGOs and social organizations is not matched by growing influence. The autonomy of organizations is restricted by law. Under the dual management system (or *shuangchong guanli tizhi*), NGOs need to obtain official support by a government agency in order to register with the Civil Affairs bureau. This way NGOs are held on a relatively tight leash. Moreover, mobilization and activities across sectors and provinces are often not allowed. This has not only led to a mismatch between the number and the influence of organizations, but also to a lack of resources and operational continuity. In addition, continuous altering regulation has also led to an unstable environment for civil society organizations, complicating for instance the formation of partnerships. Some civil society organizations, however, manage to increase their influence and autonomy by taking advantage of their embeddedness within the authoritarian state (Ho 2007, Ho and Edmonds 2008). Case studies have found that 'governmentally organized NGOs' (GONGOs) enjoy greater autonomy and influence than 'grassroots' NGOs (Wu 2002, Lu 2007b). However, it seems fair to conclude that civil society in China, in particular the influence of independent non-state actors is not as strong as in India. While (GO) NGOs in some cases enjoy autonomy, and even make use of the party-state to increase their influence; their position depends on embeddedness within the party-

state and on governmental sponsorship. Positions of these civil society organizations often tend to reflect their supporting government agency's opinions rather than opinions at the grassroots level.

In terms of political freedom, the contrast between India and China is perhaps even greater than in the case of civil society. In India, a system of rule of law was introduced by the British. Law served to legitimize colonial rule as the British considered it a step forward from the assumed pre-existing rule of man. While law was not equal for all, and also institutionalized social inequity, rule of law in general led to a persisting 'universal language of law' (Ocko and Gilmartin 2009). A similar historical development is discernible with regard to electoral democracy. Challenged by rising Indian nationalism, the British colonial rulers introduced elections in 1919, to give vent to critical voices while trying to consolidate colonial rule. As India became independent the motives of colonial rule disappeared but the institutions largely remained in place. When building the independent Union, India had a historical experience with rule of law and electoral democracy to draw from.

China has been referred to as a case of 'trapped transition' (Pei 2006), where political liberalization has lagged behind economic liberalization. What evolved instead has been ominously referred to as a 'decentralized predatory state' (ibid). China has consistently been referred to as 'unfree', for instance in the Freedom House Index (Freedom House 2010). That is not to say that there are no practices of political freedom exercise in China, for instance, elections have been common practice at the village level and for local people

congresses since the early 1980s. However, the CPC closely watches elections at the local level, and while individual candidature is permitted, alternative party formation is not allowed. It is not uncommon to hear complaints from people having to choose candidates whom they do not know and whose positions are unknown. Therefore, while formal political participation exists, the lack of political pluralism and the lack of real power of elected state organs and representatives render a political system unfree.

Finally, the different legal-constitutional backgrounds and the historical legacies of the Asian drivers matter, notably the interactions between administrative levels and between nongovernmental actors and the state. China is not a 'Rechtsstaat', and its governance system is not primarily driven by formal institutions and legal codes. Instead, governance has often been defined in terms of expected outcomes and policy goals under central planning. Policy objectives are set by the central government, and subsequently translated into objectives and quantifiable indicators for lower levels of administration. While planning has also played an important role in India's economic governance, central-local relations are not primarily structured around quantifiable goals. Rather India's federal constitution provides for a legal distinction and division of competences between the Union and the constituent states.

As both Asian countries increasingly become drivers in a (previously) Western shaped system of global governance, the fit between global governance institutions and instruments with domestic political and societal conditions will increasingly become more salient. Clearly

discernible differences between China and India lead us to hypothesize on the goodness of fit between the types of partnerships and partnerships governance on the one hand and the domestic governance contexts of India and China on the other.

7.4 Goodness of fit

Partnerships vary across a number of characteristics, including the number of partners, geographical orientations, constellations of types of partners, functions, internal organizational structures, and duration of operations, among others. There are innumerable variations to the tune of partnerships; not every one of them will find acceptance and adoption across governance implementation contexts. Differences of domestic implementation contexts in China and India with regard to civil society and rule of law, will significantly impact on the prevalent types of partnerships and the potential of partnership governance.

Civil society has often been suggested as a precondition for partnership governance. For instance, the presence of activist organizations allows for transnational linking, the brokering of partnerships, and interest representation in the face of cross-border challenges in sustainable development (e.g. Tarrow 2005). Moreover, civil society renders legitimacy to institutions that suffer a 'democratic deficit', urging partnership arrangements with civil society (Mason 2004, Bäckstrand 2006a). On the other hand partnerships have also been suggested as instruments that promote the development of civil society. Indeed, the empowered role of

business and civil society actors has been a leading objective in the UN partnerships process. However, the degree to which civil society collaboration with business (and government) has led to empowerment and positive development outcomes has been questioned. According to Darcy Ashman (2001), positive outcomes are more likely where there are clear business interests, while empowerment of citizens can easily be overshadowed by corporate decision-making.

The relative freedom and autonomy of Indian civil society could be expected to allow for more partnerships with and among NGOs and social organizations. The (electoral) democratic legitimization of government in India may motivate government agencies to partner with civil society. In terms of constellation of partners within partnerships, we expect a larger proportion of NGOs, social organizations and non-profit organizations in Indian partnerships than in Chinese partnerships. In China, civil society is more constrained; its influence is depending on a collaborative attitude towards the party-state. The role of the state, in particular of central government organizations, should therefore not be overlooked. It can be expected that central state agencies take leading roles within Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China. On the other hand, few partnerships are expected to be led and initiated by NGOs and social organizations.

The degree of political freedom we expect to see is reflected in the issues addressed by partnerships. Emancipation and human rights are particularly controversial in the context of the Chinese party-state, whereas India allows for association and advocacy for these

causes. More partnerships in India are expected to seek emancipation and empowerment of stakeholders such as women, the poor and ethnic minorities. On the other hand, few Chinese partnerships are expected to address issues related to emancipation, human rights and the empowerment of ethnic minorities.

'Governance by objectives', the strong goal orientation in Chinese central-local relations, as opposed to rule and procedural-based central-local relations under the federal constitution of India, is expected to be reflected in the organization of partnerships. Partnerships in China are not expected to fit into a more institutionalized (legal) environment; rather, they are expected to deliver and to increase output. The relative narrow goal formulation and the functional mindset typical of individual partnership projects would fit this output oriented governance. This form of governance has its historical precedent in 'campaign style' environmental and social governance of post-revolutionary China. Campaign style governance does not require long-term institutionalization of governance functions; rather it takes to form shorter term projects and often mass mobilization. Organization is geared towards attaining certain goals without the objective to embed new institutions into a longer term governance structure. It should be mentioned that campaign style governance is steadily replaced by law and law enforcement (Van Rooij 2002). However central-local relations still feature a form of governance that is driven by the attainment of objectives. In India, a pluralist governance environment, in combination with a federal constitution, allows for a relatively clear division of competences between different levels of

governance and between state and non-state institutions, expectedly leading to a better acceptance of partnership as a governance instrument which assumes such division of competences between partners.

7.5 Analyses

The following analysis consists of comparisons at three tiers: comparing the set of partnerships active in India and China with the rest of the world (meta-partnerships analysis); comparing the set of partnerships that are active in India, but not in China, with the set that is active in China, but not in India (inter-partnership analysis), and comparing the set of partnerships that are active in both China and India (intra-partnerships analysis).

The analyses are based upon two sets of data: one from the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database (GSPD), and a smaller and more detailed dataset on partnerships in China and India. The GSPD allows for a comparison between partnerships that are active in China and India and partnerships in the rest of the world. This allows a better understanding of the global process of partnership governance, and the roles of China and India in this process.

Within the sample, there are partnerships that are both active in China and India, and those that are active in China or India. The former allows for an intra-partnership comparative analysis and the latter permits an inter-partnership analysis between Chinese and Indian partnerships. The intra-partnership analysis allows us to learn about how, within the same partnerships, organization is

differentiated and adapted to the different implementation contexts of India and China; while the inter-partnership analysis allows for an assessment of which types of partnership are active in respectively China and India.

7.5.1 Meta-partnership analysis

Both the database of the UNCSD and the GSPD take Partnerships for Sustainable Development as units of analysis. They therefore contain limited information on countries of implementation. Moreover, in the GSPD, achievements of partnerships have not been detailed per country of implementation. With these restrictions, the analysis at this level is still of interest because it indicates how Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China and India are representative of, or different from, the global partnerships process.

At the global level, partnerships have been regarded as implementation instruments. In this regard, India and China are important as countries of implementation. According to the UNCSD registry, 64 partnerships (or 19.4 per cent) of all Partnerships for Sustainable Development are implemented in India, while 55 partnerships (16.7 per cent) of all partnerships are implemented in China. In the expert survey conducted for this research (see chapter 1, this volume), held at two consecutive meetings of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, partnerships that were active in India and China were among the most recognized (Figure 6.1). While 36.7 per cent of all partnerships registered with the UNCSD were unknown, even by experts, figures were much lower for

partnerships that were implementing in China and India (respectively: 27.2 per cent and 18.8 per cent).

Partnerships implementing in China and India are not only among the most recognized, they are also relatively effective. Data on outputs and functions were matched in the GSPD, resulting in an effectiveness indicator, the so-called 'function-output-fit'. The logic was: for a partnership to fulfill a certain function it should at least produce certain outputs. For instance, a training partnership should at least produce a curriculum or organize seminars. According to this logic, the function-output fit was much higher than average for partnerships that were implementing in China and/or India (Figure 7.1). Respectively 81.9 per cent and 76.6 per cent of the partnerships active in China and India had a full or partial function-output fit; comparing favorably to only 56.7 per cent on average. This suggests that, in terms of effectiveness of implementation of international sustainable development agreements through partnerships, both China and India serve as relatively favorable implementation contexts. The comparatively strong performance may be accounted for by relatively developed infrastructures and stable governments in these countries.

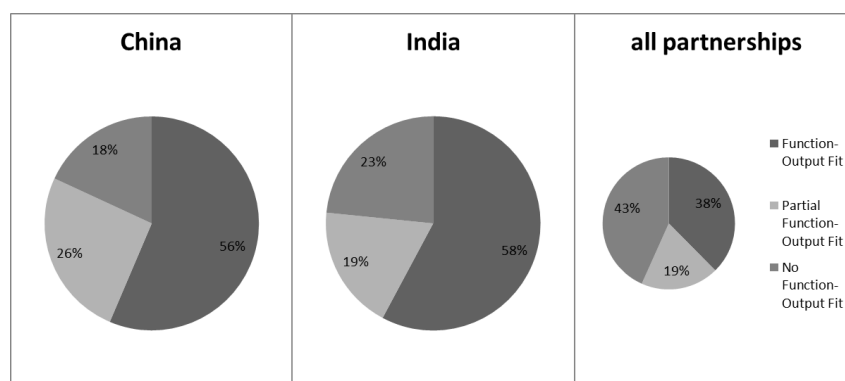


Figure 7.1 Function-output fit

It should be mentioned that registered partnerships usually have a global or regional focus; therefore output is not necessarily achieved in China and India, but within other countries of implementation. Moreover, output is a necessary indicator for effectiveness, but insufficient for impact (changes in sustainable development indicators) or outcome (behavioral change). The meta-partnership analysis indicate that China and India are important countries of implementation. Partnerships in these countries are not only among the most-widely recognized, but also among the most effective in terms of outputs.

7.5.2 Inter-partnership analysis

There are few differences in terms of number of registered partnerships implementing in respectively India and China. Of the UNCSO registered partnerships, 24 report implementation activities in India but not in China. The number of Partnerships for Sustainable Development reporting implementation in China but not in India is the same. However, a review of the status of each of these partnerships shows that 5 of the partnerships in China (16.7 per cent)

are not active, that is: these partnerships produced no output in China. Only one partnership in India is not active. Therefore, respectively 19 and 23 partnerships are implementing activities in China and India. These sets of partnerships form the basis of an inter-partnership comparative analysis that allows for an assessment of which types of partnerships are more prevalent in China and India.

In terms of geographic focus, a large share of both the India and China sets has a global focus. Partnerships often comprise of international and transnational initiatives that are initiated and implemented across different continents. In China, 45 per cent of the partnerships have a global geographic focus, while another 45 per cent of the partnerships have a regional focus (Asia; Asia-Pacific; East-Asia; South-East Asia). Only one partnership is exclusively focused on implementation in China, the 'Sino-Italian Cooperation Environmental Protection Programme'. More partnerships in India tend to have a global focus (82.6 per cent), while there are also a few partnerships exclusively focusing on implementation in India (17.4 per cent). This suggests that Partnerships for Sustainable Development in the case of China is a regional strategy, integrating and harmonizing regional implementation, while it is not a reform strategy within the domestic context. On the other hand, partnerships in India do not aim at a regional coordination and harmonization, which is likely due to India's precarious and tense regional environment. Rather, many partnerships in India are part of global networks, seeking to implement international and global aspects of sustainable development. Moreover, more partnerships in

India have a domestic focus, which indicates a role for partnerships within India's domestic sustainable development governance.

	India	China
Policy, Policy-Science interface	5	11
Science, Research and Training	3	2
Technical implementation	7	3
Clearing house, database knowledge platform (gathering information)	5	3
Advocacy	7	1
Industry	2	0

Table 7.1 Types of partnerships hosted in India and China

We distinguished partnerships in the domains of 'policy', 'advocacy', 'clearing house', 'science and research', 'industry association' and 'technical implementation'. The Chinese and Indian sets of partnership show marked differences in respect to the types of partnerships they host (Table 7.1). Both policy and advocacy partnerships aim at policy change, however in the former, government agencies are partners, while in the latter they are not. Policy partnerships are directly involved in decision making, while advocacy partnerships need to attract the attention of policy makers and they also can take a more antagonist position towards government agencies. In India, the institutional and legal conditions for advocacy partnerships are more favorable. The scope for antagonism vis-à-vis the government and for independent organization without involvement by government agencies is greater in India, resulting in a higher number of advocacy partnerships in this country. While a majority of partnerships in China are policy partnerships, often providing a science-policy interface. The underrepresentation of advocacy networks can be attributed to the

fact that in the Chinese legal and political context, the room for NGOs and independent opposition is limited. To gain influence, NGOs prefer to partner with government agencies. This has also been institutionalized by the registration requirement for NGOs to find sponsorship with a government partner (see Chapter 6). Government agencies therefore become *ex ante* partners in partnerships, complicating the formation of advocacy networks.

Another marked difference is the number of technical implementation partnerships active in India and China. This form of partnership requires a strong local presence. The lack of experience with this type of organization coupled with the reticence from the side of local authorities to allow for concurrent infrastructure and installation provision is an obstacle in China. In India, there are more technical implementation partnerships. Technical implementation partnerships indicate a better compatibility and acceptance of partnership as a domestic governance instrument, as they require partnerships at the local level, rather than global or regional partnerships.

In terms of organizational structures of partnerships there are at least two distinguishable types (Figure 7.2). Type A consists of partnerships at the global or regional level, which are also organized as partnerships domestically. Type B concerns global or regional partnerships, often initiated by international organizations that are not organized as partnerships domestically; rather, they take the form of a project under a single national partner.

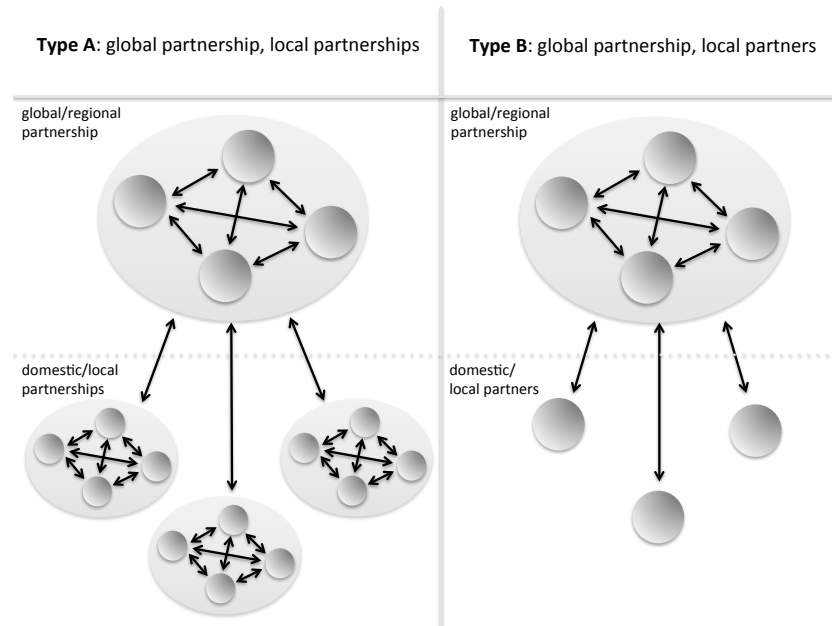


Figure 7.2 Organizational types of global partnerships

Among the partnerships that are active in India, the type-A organization is more prevalent than in China. Of the partnerships under review, 42.1 per cent belong to this type. In China, only 10 per cent of the cases analyzed form partnerships domestically. In the light of these findings, the partnership process in China should not be regarded as a transposition of partnership governance. Rather, Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China connect individual organizations with global and regional partners. Moreover, no global or regional partnership is led by partners from China, with the exception of the bilateral Sino-Italian Cooperation Environmental Protection Programme. Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China often take the form of a bilateral cooperation between government partners and foreign partners rather than a local

partnership among governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders. In this light it is not surprising that central governmental institutions are strongly represented among Chinese partners; they take the domestic lead in ten partnerships. Only one partnership lists a NGO as the Chinese partner (the Shangri-La Institute in the Earth Charter Youth Initiative). In the case of India, global partnerships are often domestically organized as partnerships (type A). This does not necessarily imply that partnership governance has been transposed into the Indian context, because this would suggest that there was no partnership governance prior to the WSSD process. More likely, the roles of nongovernmental actors have been acknowledged since long in India, allowing for partnership governance or at least creating a better circumstances for domestic partnerships. Among Partnerships for Sustainable Development Indian NGOs and business are more proactive at initiating (global and domestic) partnerships. For instance, the Electricity Governance Initiative is a global partnership initiated by Prayas Energy Group, an Indian nongovernmental non-profit trust. Also, Indian partners played a leading role in the Southern Business Challenge, an international developing country business network promoting sustainable development. A comparatively high number of partnerships exclusively focus on implementation within India (17.4 per cent), often building local partnerships. Within the Indian local partnerships (under global and regional partnerships), NGOs make up 37.5 per cent of all domestic partners, local government partners represent 25 per cent, central government 8.5 per cent, business 12.5 per cent and research and science institutions 8.3 per cent of all

partners. Such figures are not possible to give for the set of partnerships in China since most do not build local partnerships.

Finally, we compare the issue areas that partnerships in China and India address (Figure 7.3). Some partnerships address multiple issue areas – especially those implementing in India - in which case more than one issue area was assigned to the partnerships.

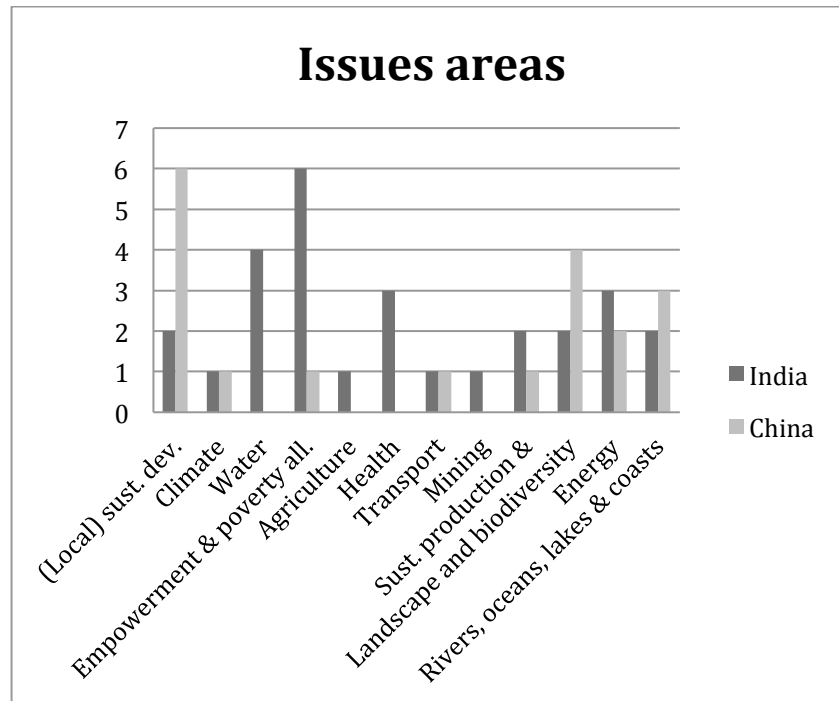


Figure 7.3 Issue areas addressed by partnerships

The limitations put on empowerment in China’s relatively restricted (civil) society are clearly observable in the pattern of issue areas that partnerships engage in. Only one partnership, Education for Rural People, addressed empowerment, human rights and poverty alleviation as primary issue areas, while six of the partnerships in India (26.1 per cent) addressed these issues, often with a focus on

minorities, (e.g. the urban poor and women). On the other hand, partnerships in China are more concerned with broader issues like (local) sustainable development, but also landscape and biodiversity.

7.5.3 Intra-partnership analysis

In this section we look at 29 partnerships that implement activities in both China and India. Most of these partnerships are policy partnerships (45 per cent), research and science partnerships (21 per cent), and clearing house partnerships (14 per cent). While such partnerships include one or a few partners from China and India, they do not require strong local presence. These partnerships may be hosted by a donor government partner, an international organization or with (international) NGOs and they rarely adapt their institutional organization to local circumstances. Through these partnerships Indian and Chinese partners draw experience and resources from foreign partners and vice versa. However, a number of partnerships are active on-the-ground. They need an actual domestic presence in the form of a local partnership: a local office, staff, et cetera. In terms of differences between implementation partnerships in China and India it is most meaningful to focus on this smaller sample of partnerships. There are eight Partnerships for Sustainable Development involved in on-the-ground implementation in both China and India. Six of these have further differentiated their organization by introducing local/domestic partnerships and organizations. A closer look at these differentiated partnership arrangements allows for a better assessment of how and to which

extent partnerships adapt to specific domestic political, economic and social contexts.

The total number of partners in India's local partnership organizations is slightly higher than in China: 21.8 partners on average in India compared to an average of 18.8 partners in China. However, this small difference would be considerably greater if we discount the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF, see Chapter 8), since this partnership has been active in China for a longer time and has actually fulfilled its projects in this country. In India, CEPF activities are still ongoing and Indian locations are only part of larger regional biodiversity hotspots that also include Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. Excluding the CEPF, the result would be an average of 11.1 partners in Chinese partnership networks and 17.7 partners in Indian partnership networks.

Non-profit organizations play a greater role in the local implementation by partnerships in India compared to partnerships in China. 45.3 per cent of Indian partners are domestic non-profit organizations, including NGOs, industrial associations, faith-based organizations and forums, while only 15.6 per cent of Chinese partners belong to this category. The participation of government agencies is considerably higher in China than in India. Local government organizations represent 11.9 per cent of the partners in Indian partnership networks, while 21.6 per cent of partners in Chinese networks are local government agencies. The role of central government agencies (such as ministries, planning bureaus and implementation agencies) is greater in Chinese domestic partnership networks than in India (respectively: 17.6 per cent and 10.1 per

cent). Also research, academia and think-tanks are strongly represented among Chinese partners (20.3 per cent), whereas only 8.3 per cent of Indian partners belong to this category.

While the constellation of partners confirms a stronger civil society presence in India, and a greater role for government agencies in China, it is important to take into account who takes the lead in the implementation and coordination of domestic networks. In China, central government agencies often take up leading roles in domestic partnership networks. For instance, the National Development and Reform Commission - China's planning agency under the State Council which is higher in rank than ministries - fulfills leading roles in the Global Methane Initiative (formerly called: Methane to Markets) and in the Partnership Promoting an Energy-Efficient Public Sector (PEPS). However, the leading roles of domestic non-profit organizations cannot be discounted. Most of these are so-called 'governmentally organized nongovernmental organizations' (GONGOs), partners that are difficult to categorize, as their activities include research and training, while they are also directly related to government agencies. Leadership in Indian partnership networks is less often in the hands of central government agencies, while local government agencies are better represented. For instance, while PEPS activities in China are coordinated through central government agencies, in India, the Maharashtra State and the Maharashtra Energy Development Agency (MEDA) act as lead partners. While the proportion of leading non-profit organizations in India's domestic partnership network is slightly lower, they do not include GONGOs. In general, we observe that among partnerships active in both China

and India, the diversity of (lead) partners is greater in India than in China. In China, a few partners are contributing to a larger number of partnerships. Most notable partners include the National Development and Reform Commission, the Chinese Academy of Sciences and their affiliates. In India, partnership activities are more often led by local and state governments, business and NGOs.

The duration of activities under the same partnerships in India is significantly shorter than in China. Within the set of partnerships that are active in both China and India, the average duration of partnership activities is respectively 7.6 and 5.3 years. This suggests that it takes significantly more time for the same partnership to start up similar activities in India than in China. This is partly explained by the higher number of partners in the average Indian partnership network, which requires more coordination and a longer consensus seeking process.

7.6 Conclusion

Partnerships for Sustainable Development represented a large-scale transposition of partnerships into developing and emerging countries. However, this general trend did not lead to the domestic institutionalization of partnerships as a form of sustainable development governance in China and India. In China, global and regional partnerships do not seem to amount to domestic partnership governance, since they take the form of rather isolated projects. They rarely build local partnerships and the role of government organizations, in particular central state agencies,

remains central, while the role of civil society remains fairly limited. In India, rather than introducing partnership governance, Partnerships for Sustainable Development better fit into the governance systems: global partnerships mimic global multi-stakeholder participatory patterns at the local level; non-state actors and civil society take leading and coordinating roles in many partnerships; and a number of partnerships are exclusively focusing on implementing aspects of sustainable development within India.

Importantly, the concrete application of partnerships in India and China is not a mere projection of governance norms and practices from the OECD area. Rather, in a global implementation context, Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China and India play an important role. Not only are there many partnerships implementing in these countries, but they are also relatively successful at the output level, compared to partnerships elsewhere.

Comparative analyses (between and within partnerships) allowed for an assessment of the political and institutional context as factors in the transposition and organization of partnerships in developing countries. They confirm that the potential for partnership governance in sustainable development varies from country to country with regard to political, societal and economic contexts. In China, where formal political participation exists but there is a lack of political pluralism and real influence for citizens, the potential for partnerships on the basis of equality between governmental and nongovernmental partners is rather limited. In India, on the other hand, the relative freedom and autonomy of civil society allows for more partnership initiatives that include NGOs and social

organizations. Within the same partnership, differences in organization can be observed depending on whether activities take place in China or India. In spite of the global reach and universal goal formulations of these partnerships, we observe considerable adaptation at the domestic level. In China, global (and regional) partnerships tend to involve fewer partners, while few local partnership networks are set up. Rather than transposing partnership governance to China, the partnership process serves to connect individual (mostly government) organizations in China with global and regional partners. In India, global partnerships involve many partners, including a diverse set of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, forming local networks. Therefore, Partnerships for Sustainable Development do not only connect Indian partners to counterparts around the world, they also introduce partnership networks in India. In terms of geographical scope, partnerships in China are more often part of regional strategies than in India, aiming at the integration and harmonization of regional implementation, rather than at domestic reform. The Chinese type of domestic organization of partnerships seems to be congruent with an objective-oriented type of governance, seeking immediate goal attainment, rather than long-term institutionalization of partnership governance. This type of domestic organization is also characterized by a comparatively short preparation time for domestic activities.

Partnerships in India do not aim at regional coordination and harmonization. Rather, many Partnerships for Sustainable Development in India are part of global networks, seeking to implement international and global sustainable development

agreements. In addition, a relatively high number of partnerships in India have a domestic focus, indicating a domestic role for Partnerships for Sustainable Development in implementation and reform of domestic policies and institutions. The Indian type of domestic organization of partnerships takes a much longer time to develop: more partners from more sectors need to reach an agreement. This process, however, does not only lead to output, but also to domestic and local partnerships. The impacts, in terms of institutional reform, are therefore deeper in India than in China.

These analyses of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China and India are momentary assessments. They predict limited potential for partnership governance in China, and greater compatibility of domestic governance with partnerships in India. However, in the long-term it is difficult to assess whether, for instance, China will become a more suitable place for partnership governance. This will depend on domestic reform at large, rather than reform in the relatively limited area of sustainable development (see Chapter 5). Also, as Chinese partners – particularly within the central government bureaucracy – gain more experience with partnerships, they also obtain transnational capacity: the ability to work across sectoral and cultural boundaries, which is conducive to the development of domestic partnership governance on the long term.

8 Local Governance Impacts of Global Partnerships: China and the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund⁸⁷

8.1 Introduction

Partnerships for Sustainable Development were presented as official outcomes at the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, as implementation mechanisms to achieve global sustainable development. Partnerships are sometimes regarded as a vehicle for reform in the international system to counter a state-centered approach, which is often considered as insufficiently effective and legitimate in the face of global environmental change (Biermann and Dingwerth 2004). For instance, Jonathan Lash noted that Partnerships for Sustainable Development are

“the first stirrings of a new way of governing the global commons – the beginnings of a shift from the stiff formal waltz of traditional diplomacy to the jazzier dance of improvisational solution-oriented partnerships that may include non-government organizations, willing governments and other stakeholders” (UN 2002b).

⁸⁷ This chapter will be submitted for publication as an article.

On the other hand, partnerships have been criticized for allowing governments to abandon their responsibilities in sustainable development; and for referring to voluntary and private sector commitments instead of committing to new binding international agreements (Streck 2003). Critics of neoliberal globalization have taken the critique of global partnerships further by arguing that partnerships facilitate neoliberalization in developing countries; packaged as new commitments and resources, partnerships prioritize business and capital, while the poor are further marginalized (Miraftab 2004a, Van der Wel 2004). As proponents and antagonists debate which kind of governance partnerships help to bring about, little empirical evidence exists to support grand narratives on the systematic impact of partnerships on governance. In the first place, a focus on partnerships at the global level of governance is incomplete because partnerships assume a multilevel dimension, particularly in terms of local and domestic governance contexts. Therefore, the actual effects of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in terms of governance impacts cannot be empirically established by investigating them as instruments of global governance alone. Second, it is difficult to establish the governance impact of partnerships because individual partnerships rarely represent investments and interventions so large that changes could easily be attributed to them. Alternatively one could observe the effects of a larger set of partnerships in specific implementation contexts (see Chapter 6 and Chapter 7). However, many partnerships seek immediate goal attainment rather than reforms in domestic or local governance (see Chapter 7). Moreover, the involvement of

partnerships in a certain implementation context may actually be very limited⁸⁸. A study on the aggregated effects of partnerships on governance, therefore, might only reflect a narrow focus on goal attainment, rather than reforms in governance. Only a few in the larger set of registered Partnerships for Sustainable Development overtly attempt at reconfiguring governance in domestic and local implementation contexts. The study of these partnerships allows for a better assessment of the governance impact of individual partnerships, but also the potential for partnerships to become institutionally embedded in specific implementation contexts. Such embedding might be referred to as the development of ‘partnership governance’, a mode of governance that features generalized patterns of involvement of non-state actors through partnerships. By closely observing empirical patterns of adaptation of partnerships to local implementation contexts, partnership governance can subsequently be qualified, for instance in terms of the extent to which it reflects features of international institutionalism or global neoliberal governance.

The empirical focus in this chapter is on the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) in the Chinese implementation context. This chapter analyzes the local application of the global CEPF approach, and assesses CEPF’s impact on China’s biodiversity governance. Two research strategies are combined, one consisting of interviews with

⁸⁸ For instance, in the UNCSO’s registry the limited involvement of one individual (e.g. a researcher) in a certain country already makes that country a ‘Country of Implementation’, even when the partnership in question does not aim at influencing governance in that country.

stakeholders at different locations, and one consisting of quantitative analysis of data. Interviews were held at the UN Headquarters during two consecutive sessions of the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development (UNCSD), at the World Bank and at Conservation International (CI) headquarters. In China, interviews were held at project sites in Yunnan province, Conservation International China and at Shanshui Conservation Center. Secondly, financial data and data about participation were analyzed from reports⁸⁹ which are available on CEPF's website. This chapter proceeds to discuss features of CEPF's global approach and China's implementation context for partnerships. Subsequently, the discussion turns to CEPF's activities in China, in particular how CEPF's local approach diverges from CEPF's global approach. The remainder of the chapter discusses CEPF's influence on biodiversity governance in China, and describes how the CEPF fits into a wider application of partnership governance in China. The conclusion summarizes and discusses China's developing partnership governance in biodiversity conservation.

8.2 CEPF's financing mechanism

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is one of the earliest and largest biodiversity partnerships to operate in China, CEPF's global approach has also been recognized as distinctly neoliberal (Duffy 2008, Litzinger 2006). But what are 'neoliberal partnerships'?

⁸⁹ Reports were in English or Chinese.

Partnerships in biodiversity conservation have occasionally been regarded as instrumental in the neoliberalization of nature (Duffy 2008, MacDonald 2010). For instance, partnerships have introduced 'ecotourism', creating new markets which supposedly contribute to both conservation of species and habitat, and economic development. Partnerships have also been understood as an alternative governance strategy to challenge the role of the state in biodiversity conservation (Litzinger 2006). Moreover, partnerships have also been seen as a means to exclude people from protected areas (MacDonald 2010). The possibility that partnerships – in spite of their problem-solving rhetoric – lend legitimacy to environmental destruction and even suppression of people is reason to critically observe and assess the impact of partnerships in biodiversity governance. According to critics of neoliberal governance, partnerships play at least two important roles in governance. First, partnerships help to reconfigure the state, by introducing market values and discipline in the public sector and by redefining the borders between the public and the private sector (Gill 1998, 25). Second, partnerships are deployed as a response to, what Stephen Gill calls, 'dislocations' (see 1998, 26); the negative effects of authorizing greater influence of capital. Subsequently, partnerships address externalities of neoliberal globalization, such as environmental damage and poverty, to ultimately lend justification to the greater purposes of neoliberal governance, the empowering of the private sector, the privatization of responsibilities, the protection of free capital flows and sustained economic growth (see Mert 2012, Miraftab 2004a).

Operating between western-based donor organizations and implementation contexts in developing countries, CEPF could be perhaps be regarded as a potential ‘Trojan horse of neoliberal development’ (Miraftab 2004a), which stealthily introduces privatization (Van der Wel 2004), and removes responsibilities from governments in developing countries. The neoliberal tenets of the CEPF, established in 2000, is partly manifest in its organization, which features a partnership between the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the McArthur Foundation, Conservation International (CI) and the governments of Japan and France. It is a “partnership from the top down, (...) six donors came together to support one program”⁹⁰. This top-down development of the CEPF has subsequently been matched by a global organization. Conveniently located in Arlington, at the headquarters of Conservation International (CEPF’s administrating partner), a stone throw away from its major partners, the US government⁹¹, the GEF, and the World Bank. The role of the managing team is to oversee the consistent application of CEPF’s conservation approach throughout more than 20 biodiversity hotspots worldwide, ensuring that funds are allocated to civil society led projects, and that implementation of activities level are consistent with investment strategies (so-called ‘biodiversity hotspot profiles’). Biodiversity hotspot profiles are

⁹⁰ Interview with John Watkin 11 February 2008, Conservation International, Arlington, VA.

⁹¹ Although the US government is not formally listed as a partner, in practice the US treasury’s consent is necessary for the GEF to agree within the Donor Council to GEF investments in the CEPF. Interview with Lauren Kelly 2008, 11 February 2008, World Bank Headquarters, Washington DC.

approved by the Donor Council, which consists of prominent members of partner organizations and takes major decisions.

The geographic and organizational proximity to Washington-based international financial institutions does not warrant a neoliberal labeling of the CEPF. However, the CEPF as a funding mechanism could be regarded as neoliberal in its outlook, as it aims to provide “strategic assistance to nongovernmental organizations and other private sector partners to help conserve biodiversity hotspots, Earth’s biologically richest and most threatened regions” (CEPF 2009). The CEPF refers to this funding mechanism as ‘flexible funding’. According to Jack Tordoff, CEPF Grant Director, flexible funding “refers to the ability to deliver grant support for conservation action in a range of contexts, (...) in different political contexts”⁹². In operational terms, flexibility of funding means that CEPF’s partners, the World Bank and GEF in particular, channel funds through CEPF to non-state actors. Such a funding mechanism represents a remarkable departure from regular World Bank and GEF transactions that are generally directed through national treasuries. Subsequently, the CEPF acts as a linking pin between large international donors and local civil society organizations. The implication of this flexible funding mechanism is that global finance organizations could circumvent the state and might even support opposition groups in developing countries.

⁹² Personal Communication. The meaning of flexible funding is not clearly defined in CEPF documents. CEPF executive director Patricia Zurita refers to the fact that grantees’ funding is conditional upon delivering conservation outcomes, therefore the funding process varies according to speed and accountability.

As a funding mechanism, the CEPF seems to conform to the notion of a neoliberal partnership as it seeks to reconfigure biodiversity governance by strengthening civil society and private partners vis-à-vis governments, and as it unshackles international finance and diverts it towards private transactions. In so doing, the CEPF ‘liberates’ capital to foster civil society and private actors as substitutes for government authority in biodiversity conservation.

8.3 CEPF’s governance approach

CEPF is not only a partnership in an organizational sense, rather the CEPF “fosters many layers of partnership”⁹³. In particular, the CEPF wants to introduce partnerships in local implementation contexts: “We have partnership in our title, and that is our (...) way of implementing”⁹⁴. By building local civil society alliances the CEPF wants to provide a governance solution in the face of lagging implementation and poor outcomes of national policies and international environmental agreements. The CEPF acts on the premise that effective biodiversity conservation requires the joint effort and pooling of resources by multiple actors at every level of governance, from the global to the local. The CEPF regards the establishment of broad local civil society alliances as its ultimate goal; “a revolution in conservation” (CEPF 2010). Therefore, CEPF is not only a financing mechanism in global biodiversity conservation, it

⁹³ Interview with John Watkin.

⁹⁴ Interview with John Watkin.

is also a governance oriented project that seeks to reconfigure biodiversity governance in local implementation contexts.

The basic tenets of CEPF's approach towards biodiversity governance are geographic prioritization, empowerment of local civil society, and poverty alleviation.

8.3.1 Geographic prioritization

CEPF's ultimate aim is to protect large swaths of biologically rich systems around the world, by providing:

“strategic assistance to nongovernmental organizations and other private sector partners to help conserve biodiversity hotspots, Earth's biologically richest and most threatened regions” (CEPF 2009).

The CEPF does not emphasize political geography; instead of countries, CEPF refers to biodiversity hotspots. Biodiversity hotspots are scientifically and bio-geographically prioritized regional entities. They were defined through profiling on the basis of biogeographic characteristics. Originally introduced in the early 1980s (Odum and Cooley 1980), hotspot profiling consisted of an assessment of ecosystem properties before a project is initiated, and a similar assessment afterwards, in order to determine impacts on ecosystems. The first list of biodiversity hotspots was suggested in 1988, consisting of ten tropical forest areas with exceptionally high levels of endemism which face exceptional degrees of threat (Myers 1988). Myers' initial listing relied on basic data such as the number of vascular plant species, the level of plant endemism, as well as

personal experience. The list was further expanded to include Mediterranean type ecosystems (Myers 1990) using newly formulated quantitative criteria: hotspots should contain at least 1,500 vascular plants as endemics, and should have 30 per cent or less of the historical habitat cover. The listing remained highly arbitrary in spite of these quantitative criteria, not in the least because the size of areas was not defined until much later⁹⁵. Although not specifically mentioned as a criterion, listed hotspots were mostly areas in developing countries. According to Myers, hotspots in wealthy parts of the world, for instance Hawaii and Queensland, also face threats, but the threat does not so much stem from a lack of (financial) resources, but from political unwillingness (Myers 1988). Interestingly, singling out areas in developing countries implies a political-geographic criterion in the listing of hotspots, leading to divergence in suggested approaches for developing developed countries. While biodiversity protection in developed countries is assumed to be a function of politics, in developing countries it is assumed to be a function of science and (Western) funding. This apolitical approach towards developing countries resonates with discussions in governance scholarship on 'limited statehood' (Cheng and Wang 2009, Risse and Lehmkuhl 2006) and 'weak governance' (Yu 2010, Cheng and Wang 2009) that question the legitimacy and effectiveness of governments in developing countries, especially where they concern non-democratic ones. Not

⁹⁵ The size of hotspots has been limited to one million hectares (Mittermeier et al. 2003).

only do these governments lack capabilities and capacities, they are also considered too corrupt (Laurance 2004) to effectively protect the environment. Subsequently, alternative modes of governance could and should emerge to fill functional gaps in biodiversity conservation. The CEPF, which was the first to apply a hotspot profiling methodology on a large scale, seems to fit in this apolitically defined governance gap. While the CEPF considers government policies in profiling exercises, governments are only considered as one of the many types of stakeholders and not necessarily as politically sovereign (Litzinger 2006). Governments are even seen as a threat because they “fail to address the causes of biodiversity loss” and government policies are “incorrectly targeted” and “incompatible” with plans and policies by other sectors (CEPF 2013b). CEPF’s ecological and social mapping exercise should therefore represent a more ‘rational’ and ‘scientific’ strategic intervention in biodiversity conservation, directing investments towards scientifically defined priorities in scientifically delimited biogeographic regions.

8.3.2 Civil society

Observed or assumed weak governance in biodiversity conservation does not necessarily inform a strategic focus on nongovernmental actors. In fact, one option to improve biodiversity conservation governance would be to enhance state capacity, for instance by fighting corruption. However, most scholars on biodiversity hotspots (Smith et al. 2001, Mittermeier et al. 1998, Dalton 2000) and the CEPF emphasize the role on nongovernmental actors and scientists. CEPF’s participatory procedures, for instance in drafting biodiversity

hotspot profiles, have been regarded as an important quality (Visseren-Hamakers, Leroy, and Glasbergen 2012). However, the particular form of participation in the CEPF has also been criticized for largely excluding government and smaller civil society organizations (Litzinger 2006). Subsequently, civil society is put forward as a countervailing force, a private and participatory alternative to ineffective and undemocratic governments, and to address legitimacy and effectiveness deficits (Gemmill and Bamidele-Izu 2002). Some even argue that, when governments “don’t like biodiversity”, civil society organizations and international donors should to “talk to the opposition” (Dalton 2000, 926). The global CEPF approach fits this view with its direct appeal to civil society organizations for “coordination and collaboration with non-traditional conservation partners” (Thomsen 2005, 9). By building civil society alliances locally, the CEPF aims to provide a governance solution in the face of lagging implementation and poor outcomes of government policies and international environmental agreements. Moreover, the inclusion of civil society should become a long-term feature in biodiversity governance, and CEPF’s civil society alliances should long outlast the programme’s immediate interventions. Depending on the implementation context (country or biodiversity hotspot), the promotion of a wide civil society partnership in governance could indeed constitute a radical change, especially where governance is generally considered the more or less exclusive realm of the state.

8.3.3 Poverty alleviation

An often attributed role of partnerships is to address externalities and undesirable outcomes of globalization. These externalities include economic inequality and environmental damage. The CEPF thematically fits this dedication to dislocations. Not only does it address environmental degradation (biodiversity loss), but it also aims to reduce poverty. Especially in its public relations the CEPF emphasizes its commitment to poverty alleviation. The emphasis on poverty alleviation may relate to the fact that the CEPF develops operations in developing countries where issues of development and poverty are especially salient. Moreover, the official mission of the World Bank, one of the founding partners of the CEPF, is to reduce poverty. Subsequently, the World Bank's participation in the CEPF is conditional upon foreseeable social-economic benefits of its interventions. The strategic emphasis on poverty alleviation is reflected in the CEPF organization; Regional Implementation Teams are required to report on the social-economic effects of hotspot interventions. However, investment strategies of particular biodiversity hotspots do not necessarily contain performance targets related to socioeconomic benefits or rural development. Rather, the CEPF assumes a positive correlation between biodiversity protection and poverty reduction (CEPF 2004). Subsequently, the CEPF primarily concentrates on biodiversity conservation in its everyday operations, while socioeconomic benefits are assessed afterwards.

Arguably, CEPF's approach towards poverty alleviation features a considerable gap between rhetoric and actual operations. In CEPF's communications few specifications are found of the relation between

biodiversity protection and poverty reduction, subsequently the synergy between biodiversity conservation and poverty alleviation remains a theoretical longshot. The CEPF assumes it alleviates poverty by simply operating in rural areas with high levels of poverty, and by counting impoverished communities and indigenous peoples among its grant receivers (CEPF 2008a). In a presentation at a workshop to explore linkages between the World Bank and CEPF operations, Jorgen Thomsen, then executive director of the CEPF, pointed out six characteristics which supposedly set CEPF apart from other biodiversity initiatives, including geographic prioritization and civil society, however, he tellingly failed to mention poverty alleviation (Thomson 2005). In China, the hotspot profile did not refer to poverty alleviation targets (CEPF 2002b), socioeconomic effects were rather assessed afterwards (CEPF 2008b). In the present investigation, the focus is on the adaptation of CEPF's strategy and operations in China, therefore the subsequent discussion will be limited to the adaptation of the hotspot approach, and the approach towards civil society.

8.4 Adapting CEPF's approach to local implementation contexts

8.4.1 Compromising global approaches

The CEPF as a financing mechanism and as an global approach towards biodiversity governance seems to bear some resemblance of a neoliberal partnership. The CEPF allows transactions to circumvent national treasuries of developing countries; while its emphasis on

biogeographic regions, civil society and private actors should result in a reconfiguration of governance, and an apolitical and solutions-oriented approach which substitutes state-centered conservation approaches. Moreover, the CEPF seems to address dislocations of globalization, in particular environmental degradation and poverty. Since 2000, CEPF has implemented 22 hotspot strategies, invested in 65 countries and territories and supported 1,790 partners (CEPF 2013a). Does this imply that the CEPF has circumvented 65 national governments and substituted governmental efforts in all biodiversity hotspots? Such a conclusion would imply a universal applicability of CEPF's approach and the willingness on the part of governments to not only host CEPF operations but also to accept its 'anti-government' methodology. Such paradox would involve the denial of politics both on the side of governments of developing countries and on the side of the CEPF. In reality, the CEPF cannot solely rest on approval by its Donor Council; rather it needs approval by government authorities in the respective biodiversity hotspots. To gain this approval, negotiations take place and compromises are made with regards to CEPF's global approach. China seems to be a case in point. There CEPF's operations were not merely informed by a global conservation blueprint, but also by the renegotiation and subsequent adaptation of the global approach to local and domestic implementation contexts. Even when the CEPF as a global approach alludes to neoliberal ideas about governance, the actual extension of neoliberal governance into domestic implementation contexts cannot be assumed.

8.4.2 China's implementation context for partnerships

China at first sight does not seem to make the most enabling implementation context for Partnerships for Sustainable Development (see Chapter 6). Partnership arrangements are relatively new and uncommon in China's environmental governance and do not yet constitute a substantial part of China's governance (Turner 2003). Moreover, a heavily regulated field of social organizations severely limits autonomy of non-state actors vis-à-vis the state. Civil society is severely constrained in China, with the government requiring a difficult registration procedure and government patronage. These restrictions potentially undercut the rationale for partnerships, since increased participation and prior consultation have been associated with better implementation, and NGOs supposedly render legitimacy and credibility to partnership governance (Bäckstrand 2005). Moreover, the relative lack of experience with collaborative types of governance in China's state bureaucracy may further constrain the instrumentalization of partnerships (Adams, Young, and Zhihong 2006). Finally, China's simultaneous development of market institutions and bureaucratic reforms make a fast changing legal and organizational context (Brown, Orr, and Lou 2006) which presents additional risks for new institutional arrangements such as partnerships. In short, China does not constitute an ideal environment for partnerships to thrive in. Yet many Partnerships for Sustainable Development indicate they implement in China⁹⁶. Moreover, in China's biodiversity conservation,

⁹⁶ 55 of the partnerships registered with the UNCSD.

a functional space seems to open up for partnerships. As a relatively new policy area, biodiversity conservation has not (yet) been monopolized by a certain bureaucratic system (*'tiao'*), allowing for more opportunities to experiment with alternative governance mechanisms. There also seem to be good reasons to experiment with partnerships. A growing body of formal conservation policies (see Xu, Wang, and Xue 1999, Liu et al. 2003) such as the 1988 Wild Animal Conservation Act and the 1998 Natural Forest Protection Program, has not prevented a continued loss of habitat and biodiversity (Xu, Ding, and Wu 2012). While organizations of the state continue to fulfill a central role in devising policies and strategies, biodiversity conservation in China suffers from a number of short-comings related to traditional top-down approaches. For instance, local stakeholders and local officials often do not have the incentive to implement central policies (McBeath and McBeath-Huang 2006); institutions lack credibility (Ho 2006); and too few resources are made available for park management (Liu et al. 2003). In this 'low governance environment' (Yu 2010) policies and nature reserve systems exist on paper, while policing and enforcement systems are ill equipped. Rather than devising more policies and legislation, new governance mechanisms could lead to better implementation, enforcement and the leveraging of new (non-state) resources. But even if China would constitute a low governance environment, it is not an institutional void where partnerships are simply transferred into as 'best-practices'. Rather the local application of partnerships assumes a degree of institutional adaptation. This raise the question how and to which extent these partnerships are adapted (Chan 2009,

see Chapter 6). It would seem unlikely that China as an authoritarian driver in global governance (Messner and Humphrey 2006) would simply submit to partnerships and allow open challenges to domestic governance, by – for instance – questioning the dominant role of the state and the Party. Rather partnerships in China are likely to accept norms and to take heed of existing institutions, which include limitations to civil society and political organization. Partnerships in the Chinese context could represent a significant departure from traditional statist approaches. However, it cannot be assumed that the resulting partnership governance is simply the extension of neoliberal global governance. More likely, China's domestic partnership governance will feature an amalgam of global and domestic governance. While describing political processes in China is complicated by a lack of transparency, close examination of CEPF operations in China and its financial allocations reveal divergences from the global CEPF approach.

8.5 Strategic adaptation in CEPF's China operations

8.5.1 Bringing back the central government

The CEPF as a financing instrument facilitates investments that could circumvent national treasuries and directly support private actors and nongovernmental organizations. However, such design could effectively be countered by domestic requirements and procedures that reattribute a decisive role to national treasuries. This has certainly been the case in CEPF's China operations.

Early on, the CEPF identified three biodiversity hotspots that are (partly) located in the People's Republic of China: 'the Mountains of Southwest China' (MSW), 'the Eastern Himalayas' and the 'Indo-Burma hotspot'. However, before the CEPF could commence operations, China insisted on approval by its Ministry of Finance. Only one hotspot (MSW) gained approval. What made the difference? At the launch meeting of the CEPF in November 2000, "the Mountains of South-Central China", later renamed MSW, was mentioned in a list of possible hotspots for CEPF investments (Global Environment Facility (GEF) 2000) and preparations were undertaken for a CEPF investment. Approval came late for the Mountains of Southwest China hotspot (Ministry of Finance 2002), and did not come at all for the Indo-Burma and the Eastern Himalayas hotspots, according to CI, because "focal points mistakenly see CEPF as a potential threat to their national allocations" (CEPF 2011). This indicates that CEPF's operations were controversial and discussed at the highest political levels. In their dealings with the GEF/World Bank, Chinese government officials were accustomed to working with governmental partners. The direct support of transnational actors through the CEPF was something new. The CEPF partnership would delegate coordination, management and negotiations to an international NGO (CI). Even more controversial was the possibility that GEF/World Bank funds would flow directly to civil society organizations. Therefore, the approval of one biodiversity hotspot intervention may be a greater surprise than the rejection of other hotspot projects. The crucial difference lies in the fact that the MSW area is almost entirely within China's boundaries, whereas only

(smaller) parts of the Indo-Burma and Eastern Himalayas hotspots are under Chinese jurisdiction. Investments in the Indo-Burma and Eastern Himalayas hotspots would have to be shared among different countries. More importantly, the MSW investment programme could be fully adapted to the Chinese governance context, since all operations would be within Chinese jurisdiction. As a result, the Government of China, in particular the Ministry of Finance, could demand strategic and operational adaptations to CEPF's global approach. As a result, the proposal for the MSW hotspot emphasized complementarities of CEPF investments with existing government policies. CEPF's operations would aim

“to focus on developing conservation leadership and capacity... against the backdrop of several opportunities in China, including the 10-year logging ban and several multi-billion governmental initiatives to convert farmland into forest and reforest previously logged areas”(CEPF 2002a).

Such direct links to existing government policies and investments were missing in the Indo-Burma and Eastern Himalayas hotspot proposals. Moreover, China detracted CEPF's emphasis on reconfiguring governance, by underscoring the global biodiversity outcomes of the investment rather than the possible implications for domestic governance: “China will not only gain from, but also contribute to (...) global biodiversity conservation” (Ministry of Finance 2002). The revised approach for the MSW hotspot contains elements that are aimed at limiting the governance implications of

CEPF's operations. The next section assesses the strategy for the MSW hotspot to determine to which extent CEPF's global approach has been revised and adapted for the Chinese implementation context.

8.5.2 Revising CEPF's governance approach for the MSW hotspot

CEPF prides itself because the MSW intervention was “the first time MOF has endorsed a project for nongovernmental organizations” (CEPF 2003, 5). However, approval cannot be mistaken for a *carte blanche* to invest in any nongovernmental organization or private actor as the CEPF would deem fit. The CEPF had to address concerns over direct financing of civil society actors; it had to strategically adapt its global approach with changes in definitions and procedures. In particular civil society was redefined. The CEPF defines a local civil society group as “one that is legally registered in a country within the relevant hotspot and has an independent board of directors or similar type of independent governing structure” (CEPF 2009, 4, note 5) Under Chinese NGO regulations, NGOs need a dual registration, and they need to be registered with the Ministry of Civil Affairs. Moreover NGOs need a supporting government agency, a so-called '*popo*' (mother-in-law) (Ho 2001). Especially the latter requirement clashes with the notion of NGO independence. In fact, many registered NGOs in China are commonly referred to as Governmentally Organized Nongovernmental Organizations (GONGOs). Registered NGOs in China are structurally disposed towards congruity with (central) government aims, even when some

NGOs and even GONGOs have attained a greater deal of independence (Wu 2003, Ho 2001). CEPF's aim to construct an independent civil society alliance on the basis of registered NGOs was thus limited by China's regulated NGO environment. On the one hand, relatively few NGOs managed to register officially to qualify for CEPF support. On the other hand, few of the registered NGOs were sufficiently developed in terms of knowledge and resources to handle CEPF investments. In fact, in the early years of CEPF operations the Chinese NGO sector was also in its infancy; few domestic NGOs had the capacity to lead projects. CEPF simply could not get enough NGOs to submit proposals⁹⁷. According to Li Zhang, CI China director,

“Some of the local NGOs don't know how to write a proposal (...) even a proposal in Chinese is too difficult for them”⁹⁸.

Li Zhang, director of Conservation International's China office, felt compelled to revise the definition of civil society

“The problem is it's difficult for NGOs to register here, that's why we have individuals as grantees or local communities”⁹⁹.

The definition of civil society was not only widened to include individuals, the MSW hotspot profile declared a much broader understanding of civil society:

⁹⁷ Interview with Li Ling, regional director WWF, Chengdu, 17 April 2010.

⁹⁸ Interview with Li Zhang, Conservation International China, Beijing, 7 September 2009.

⁹⁹ Interview with Li Zhang.

“Given the political and economic landscape in China ... it is important to recognize that the definition of civil society should not be strictly limited to NGOs but should also include research institutes, universities, associations, community groups, private sector, and even individuals” (CEPF 2002b).

In the further course of CEPF’s activities in China, natural reserve management bureaus and even local governments were funded, in spite of CEPF’s global approach that explicitly rules out financial assistance to government agencies. The contradiction between the CEPF’s global approach, which has been called “decidedly anti-state” (Litzinger 2006, 72), and CEPF’s adapted China approach seems to be most pronounced in the funding of capacity building activities for government agencies. Yang Fangyi, at Shanshui Conservation Center (lead partner of the CEPF China team since 2007), defended the CEPF’s local adaptation:

“It was very hard to convince donors in Washington, for instance when some nature reserves were willing to apply for CEPF grants we received [their] applications. When we regarded them as good, we gave a positive recommendation to the international office. And sometimes they said ‘oh this is government, we cannot fund’, so we had to find other ways.”

‘Other ways’ comprised of revised grant procedures. CEPF found a partner in other international NGOs with China programs to sub-

grant to local governments to – for instance – build capacity for nature reserve management bureaus;

“We can support TNC [The Nature Conservancy], and in that project they will support nature reserves through sub-grants”^{100,101}.

Moreover the CEPF in China granted programmatic influence to government agencies, inviting them to participate in a review committee, and resulting in a close with government agencies (in particular the State Environmental Protection Agency, the Sichuan Forest Department, the Yunnan Forest Department, and the Sichuan Provincial Planning Committee). According to the CEPF,

“[this] coordination mechanism (...) does not exist in other CEPF invested areas ... a review committee that not only reviews project[s] but links CEPF project ideas to the on-going government and non-government initiatives, making CEPF projects more coordinated. It’s the first time CEPF uses this type of coordination mechanism and may adopt it in other CEPF regions as well” (CEPF 2003, 4).

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Yang Fangyi, officer at Shanshui Conservation Center, Beijing, 30 July 2012.

¹⁰¹ A similar sub-granting partner was found in the WWF, although these funds were also aimed at capacity local civil society building. With offices in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, WWF had already established a network of domestic civil society organizations it supported through grants. The CEPF, faced with difficulties to find suitable local civil society applicants, therefore integrated its small grants facility with WWF’s existing China program.

Moreover,

“the coordination mechanism works very well so far and has become a model for CEPF design in other regions” (CEPF 2003, 19).

CEPF China’s definition of civil society also emphasized the role of scientists. Such could be interpreted as a return to the original hotspot approach. In earlier work on biodiversity hotspots, NGOs and local people were almost never mentioned as stakeholders (Mace et al. 2000). Instead, the emphasis was on scholarship. Indeed, the popularization of the hotspot approach depended on the strong activism displayed by several scholars; it was “a specific instance of ecological science-as-politics” (Youatt 2008). For instance, in 2000 a group of ecologists presented the hotspot approach as a scientific consensus on the best approach to conservation (Dalton 2000). In a rather similar fashion, the greatest proponents of the hotspot approach in China are scientists. Scientists were involved in the early planning stage, for instance prominent biologist Lü Zhi is credited as the main author of the MSW hotspot profile. The early planning has been criticized for a lack of participatory quality, for instance participatory input was reduced to a five day workshop with Chinese and foreign experts, conservation biologists and staff members of TNC, CI, and WWF, while smaller and local stakeholders were not invited (Litzinger 2006, 74-75)¹⁰². During CEPF’s China operations,

¹⁰² According to Litzinger, many individuals and representatives of local NGOs felt excluded from the meeting.

scientists continued to refine methodologies, designating new – yet unprotected – ‘key biodiversity areas’ (KBA) within hotspots, while arguing for a wider recognition and adoption of CEPF’s ‘science-based’ approach. The role of Peking University is especially significant because it is the supporting organization of Shanshui Conservation Center, which hosts the CEPF China management team. According to Yang Fangyi,

“One [of the biggest CEPF impacts] is science-based implementation. CEPF aims at scientific information exchange, after the CEPF ended, academics continued to work together to share information and to provide biodiversity information for the policy makers and for the public, local communities. So this kind of scientific approach is already accepted by the region [provinces of the MSW]”¹⁰³.

While CEPF’s strategic adaptations to China’s governance context seem to contradict some elements of its global approach, they could also be a rhetorical means to convince Chinese state partners to approve CEPF operations. A review of strategic adaptations alone does not reveal how the CEPF in China navigated between two partly contradictory partnership approaches, one which excludes the state and employs a narrow definition of civil society; and another which intensively collaborates with the state and employs an expanded definition of civil society. To determine which of the two approaches

¹⁰³ Interview with Yang Fangyi, officer at Shanshui Conservation Center, Beijing, 30 July 2012

was most influential, this chapter will proceed with an analysis of financial patterns and patterns of participation in CEPF's China portfolio.

8.6 CEPF China portfolio analysis

Did CEPF's strategic adaptation substantiate in the funding of the 'new categories' of civil society: individuals, science and government agencies? Or did the CEPF revert to its global approach, and mainly support local NGOs? In the latter case the strategic adaptation of the global approach for China would mainly be rhetoric, perhaps to entice Chinese officials to approve and collaborate with the CEPF. To answer these questions, data was gathered from eighty individual CEPF grant projects. CEPF grantees are obliged to report their activities and progress in reports to the CEPF team in China. These reports are made publicly available on the CEPF website¹⁰⁴. They contain information on the grantees, collaborating partners in the funded projects, descriptions of actions, amounts of investments (including leveraged resources), and dates of actions. This data was collected in a database to allow for an aggregate view of CEPF's investment in China. This analysis features some inherent weaknesses. The data relies on self-reporting by the grantees who may be inclined to present their project outcomes more favorably, limiting a reliable assessment of effectiveness in terms of changes in biodiversity indicators, and in terms of behavioral change. Grantees

¹⁰⁴ www.cepf.net

and partners were categorized by type (science and research institutions, local or international NGOs, government, et cetera). Categorization was sometimes problematic as some de facto NGOs seek an alternative registration, for instance as for-profit companies, other NGOs would style themselves as research institute. In these cases categorization followed – as much as possible – self-descriptions of the respective organizations. Finally, NGOs were classified into international and domestic categories. This distinction is important since the global CEPF approach emphasizes its support to local civil society. Moreover, the CEPF would also like to avoid the suggestion of only supporting large international NGOs. However, in practice it is sometimes difficult to determine whether a NGO is Chinese or international. In general, China programs of international NGOs were regarded as international rather than domestic NGOs. However, in the case of CI China, the organization split up between the original CI China branch and a domestic branch, Shanshui Conservation Center. Shanshui gained its own identity and became organizationally independent from CI China in 2007; therefore Shanshui after 2007 is regarded as a domestic NGO.

8.6.1 Who coordinates?

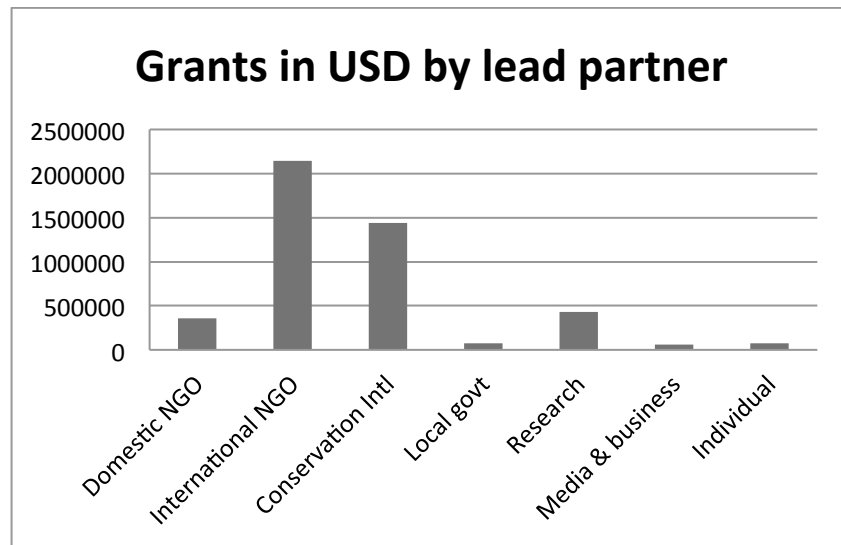


Figure 8.1 Grants in USD by lead partner

Lead partners are the main grantees of CEPF projects. They are the main applicants for CEPF funding, and report to the CEPF China team. Their organizational role depends on the respective project, whether they are the sole implementer, or the coordinator, or whether they share coordination functions within the partnership project. It can be expected, however, that lead partners are more often in coordinating roles than other partners. Data on CEPF allocations by lead grantee therefore indicates which actors are empowered in coordinating or managing positions in CEPF’s partnership governance. The CEPF in China seems to live up to the claim in its global approach that it invests in civil society; the lion’s share of CEPF investments (86 per cent) went to NGO led projects. Most of these investments, however, went to projects led by international NGOs (78 per cent, including CI), whereas domestic (Chinese national and

local) NGOs led projects only received eight per cent of total investments. These allocation patterns are clearly at odds with the claim that CEPF supports local NGOs. At the very least it appears that CEPF allocations affirm the coordinating positions to international NGOs, rather than strengthen coordinating capacities of domestic NGOs.

While CEPF generally did not put domestic NGOs in coordinating positions, they could still benefit from allocations within the grantee projects. Specific data on how funds were allocated within individual partnership projects is largely absent. Indications can be found in the participatory constellations within these projects. In one particular instance an international NGO led partnership (CI China and WWF) sub-granted to grassroots NGOs¹⁰⁵. While there seem to be financial benefits for domestic NGOs, funds only reach the grassroots in an indirect way. In contrast to domestic NGOs, international NGOs directly dealt with the CEPF team, government authorities, sponsors, and international donors. As lead partners they were invited to CEPF meetings, they communicated directly with the CEPF, and they became part of CEPF's 'civil society alliance'; most domestic NGO beneficiaries, however, were much less involved. Rather than being motivated to build lasting partnership alliances, most domestic NGOs considered the CEPF as a temporary donor. When asked about the

¹⁰⁵ A project called 'Managing CEPF's Small Grants Fund to Safeguard Endangered Species and Habitats in Southwest China' allocated 396,000 USD to 30 smaller projects, some of them benefitting grassroots NGOs.

CEPF, one of these sub-grantee domestic NGO representatives initially did not even recognize the name CEPF¹⁰⁶.

8.6.2 Who participates?

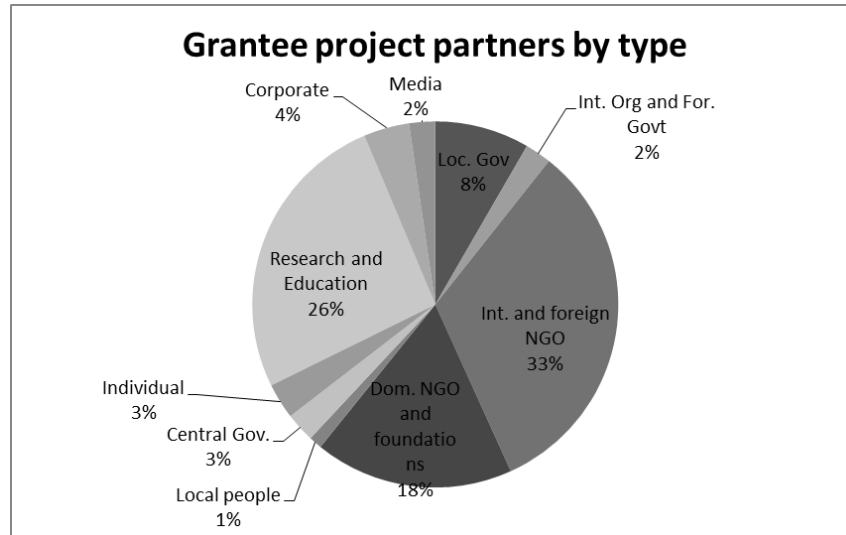


Figure 8.2 Grantee project partners by type

Grantee project partners are those participating within grant projects as reported by lead partners. A count of the number and type of partners reveals who are (final) beneficiaries of funding. According to the global CEPF approach, most beneficiaries should be civil society organizations, in particular domestic NGOs. However, the patterns of participation in grant projects demonstrate a rather low share of domestic NGO partners (18 per cent); the share of research and education organizations is higher (26 per cent), as is the share of international NGOs (33 per cent). Lead partners (mostly international

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Chen Yongsong, founder of Yunnan Econetwork, Lijiang, 9 April 2010.

NGOs) engaged research and education organizations and other international NGOs as collaborative partners, rather than domestic NGOs. These participatory patterns seem to fit CEPF's adapted approach for China, which expands the categories under civil society (to the detriment of domestic NGOs). The 'individual' and 'local people' categories – introduced in the expanded civil society definition of the adapted CEPF approach – were meant to allow for the participation of non-registered NGOs and activists. In practice, however, very few CEPF funds were allocated to individuals or local people. In at least one case the individual grantee was a local government official, who channeled the grant to a natural reserve management office (CEPF 2005b).

8.6.3 Which governance functions are supported?

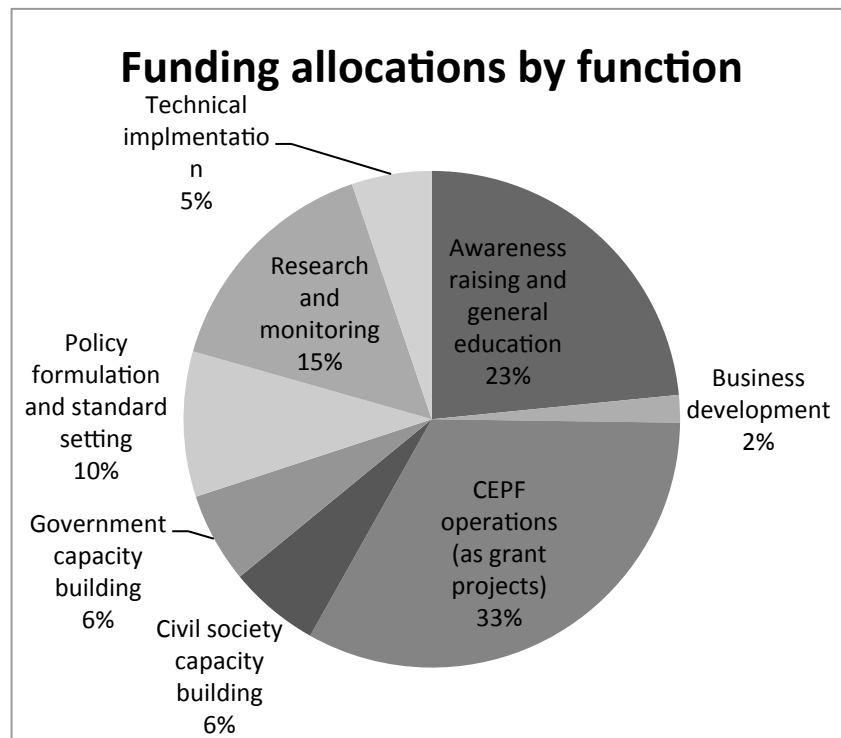


Figure 8.3 Funding allocations by function

On the basis of reports by lead partners, eighty grantee projects were categorized by function. Although projects could address more functions, one primary function was coded for each project. On the basis of CEPF’s global approach, it is reasonable to expect that funds are allocated towards civil society capacity building. However, only six per cent of total financial allocations supported civil society capacity building as the primary function. Functions like ‘research and monitoring’ and ‘awareness and education’ received much more financial support. Government agencies received a similar amount of

funding allocation for capacity building as civil society. This is remarkable because CEPF's global approach explicitly denies support to state agencies. In at least five (smaller) projects, local governments (natural reserve authorities) were grant recipients. In these projects the CEPF directly supported state capacity and policing power, by training park guards, setting up security rooms, employing veteran soldiers, and introducing the use of satellite information (CEPF 2005b). In other projects, money was not directly granted to the government, but their aim was still to strengthen government capacity. For instance the 'Development of the China World Heritage Biodiversity Program' aimed at engaging different governmental departments to collaborate in the pursuit of a World Heritage status (CEPF 2005a).

8.7 Mapping CEPF's partnership governance in China

The CEPF oversaw a set of eighty partnership projects that gathered a host of government institutions, science and education organizations, international and domestic NGOs.

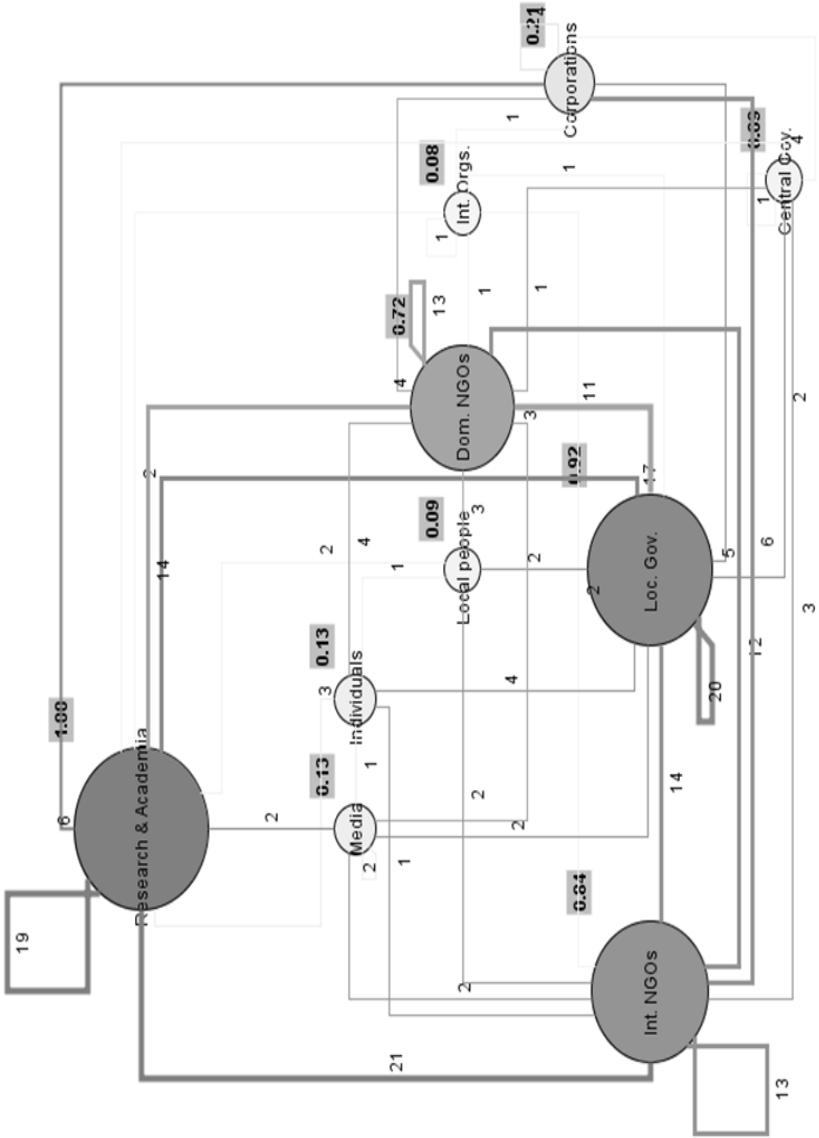


Figure 8.4 Visualization of CEPF partnership network

A visualization in YEd Graph Editor (yWorks 2011, figure 8.4) maps which type of actor partnered with which other types of actors. For instance, 21 of the grantee projects featured a partnership between one or more international NGOs on the one hand and at least one or more research and academic organizations on the other hand. And, in 19 grantee projects, two or more research and academic organizations partnered up. The frequency of a type of actor partnering in grant projects is visualized by weighted nodes; the larger the node, the more often a type of actor features as a partner in individual projects supported by the CEPF. Among ten types of partners in CEPF funded projects, four actor types stand out. The fourth heaviest node represents domestic NGOs. While this indicates that CEPF partners engaged local civil society (in the narrow definition) as partners, domestic NGOs are much less central in the CEPF's partnership governance than one would expect on the basis of CEPF's global approach. The third largest node represents international NGOs. Not only do international NGOs feature more in partnerships than domestic NGOs, they are also more often lead partner, taking on coordinating roles within CEPF funded projects. The second largest node represents local government agencies, which affirms CEPF's collaborative rather than confrontational positioning towards local government in China. By contrast, at the project level the role of central government seems to be negligible. Central government agencies, in particular the Ministry of Finance, played an important role in approving the initial investment, yet stood remote during CEPF's China operations. The largest node

represents research and academic actors. This is consistent with the emphasis on science and scientists in CEPF's adapted approach for China. The visualized CEPF network in China indicates that, rather than building a broad civil society alliance, the CEPF strengthened science-based decision-making, specifically: it strengthened the role of scientists in providing input into biodiversity conservation governance. Scientists and science organizations not only feature often as partner in CEPF funded projects, they are also part of the CEPF China team, a large share of funded projects were in the area of research and monitoring (28 per cent), and scientists were strategically involved in the profiling and the mapping of the MSW hotspot.

8.8 Consolidating partnership governance

Whether CEPF's partnership network will amount to more generalized patterns in China's biodiversity governance largely remains to be seen. A consolidation program (CEPF-2) started in 2013. The longevity of the partnership network depends on a number of factors, above all: leadership, funding, and acceptance by government authorities.

In terms of leadership, CEPF gave rise to a new and relatively resourceful domestic NGO in biodiversity conservation, Shanshui Conservation Center. Shanshui continues to promote CEPF's experience of building partnerships and engaging non-state actors in biodiversity governance, for instance through engaging new partners and attracting additional support. In terms of funding, CEPF's

partnership approach has hitherto depended on sources outside of China. CEPF's initial investment in the MSW was 6 million USD. The international Donor Council has also approved a consolidation program, adding another 1.35 million USD of investments. However, on the longer term reliance on donor funding for partnership governance seems unsustainable as international organizations and foreign governments withdraw assistance and China is no longer regarded as a developing country (McBeath and McBeath-Huang 2006, 309). International NGOs within the CEPF, however, have been successful at leveraging private funds. The largest share of funds was leveraged from international business (68 per cent). One single donor, the 3M Corporation, accounted for more than half of leveraged funds (3 million USD). Most recently, Shanshui has engaged new funders and partners, in particular from the Chinese business community. In preparation for the 2012 Rio de Janeiro Conference on Sustainable Development, Shanshui partnered with two other Chinese environmental NGOs, Greenhub Innovation and Alashan Society of Ecological Entrepreneurs (SEE), to organize a round of dialogues with corporate entrepreneurs who pledged a 500 million CNY¹⁰⁷ investment to support environmental science and NGOs over the next five years (2012-2017) (Wang 2012). Finally, CEPF has collaborated closely with Chinese government authorities. While government authorities have been reluctant to involve NGOs in policy planning, they welcomed collaboration with scientists who sometimes also work for NGOs. Sichuan Province and Qinghai

¹⁰⁷ Approximately 87 million USD (20 June 2012).

Province have integrated some of CEPF's maps into their respective biodiversity strategies, while Yunnan province is also considering this¹⁰⁸. Hotspot mapping, the inventory of species and the designation of areas and corridors, are methods that require scientific input. Subsequently, these methodologies potentially bring together different actors on a longer term basis, beyond the duration of CEPF's initial China operations, contributing to an extended duration of the governance network that was first introduced by the CEPF in China.

8.9 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter addressed the question how Partnerships for Sustainable Development influence governance in local implementation contexts, particularly focusing on the CEPF and China.

The governance impact of partnerships has been much debated, whether and how they complement existing global sustainability governance, and whether they extend neoliberal governance into developing countries. Because global governance is a multilevel phenomenon, and global partnerships navigate between global approaches and local implementation contexts, the actual governance impacts of Partnerships for Sustainable Development cannot be established empirically by investigating them as mere instruments of global governance. Rather, the impacts on

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Yang Fangyi, officer at Shanshui Conservation Center, Beijing, 30 July 2012

governance should also be investigated in specific implementation contexts, focusing on how partnerships undergo adaptation both in strategic and operational terms.

The CEPF as a global partnership for biodiversity conservation features a governance approach which could be considered neoliberal. As a funding mechanism, the CEPF diverts intergovernmental funds to private and non-state actors. Moreover, the CEPF aims to reconfigure local governance; introducing an apolitical and solutions-oriented approach to substitute state-centered biodiversity governance. In practice however, the CEPF does not necessarily extend neoliberal governance into specific implementation contexts. The present chapter demonstrated that CEPF's partnership governance in China is very different from how international donors and some scholars intended it to be. The governance impact of the CEPF in China features an amalgam of influences from global and domestic governance. On the one hand, partnership governance introduced by the CEPF in China reflects neoliberal institutionalism (such as the role attribution to business partners, foreign funding agencies and international NGOs, and the prioritization of biogeographic regions). On the other hand, impacts of CEPF's global approach do not go unmediated. As the CEPF attempted to reconfigure governance it navigated between two somewhat contradictory approaches, one which excludes the states and employs a narrow definition of civil society, and another which intensively collaborates with the state and employs an expanded definition of civil society. Observed governance impacts reflect more of the latter approach, as CEPF's partnership governance in China

remains centered on local governments, and the CEPF conformed to China's restrictive environment for social organization. However, the introduction of partnership governance could still be regarded as a significant departure from traditional statist approaches. Participation was reinterpreted as input by nongovernmental organizations (in particular science and academia) to facilitate effective governance by government authorities, rendering partnership governance the specific meaning of science-based decision-making.

Finally, governance scholars have been criticized for depoliticizing politics, by focusing on 'solutions' and applying a functionalist and managerial lens to collective problems. Indeed, biodiversity governance in developing countries has at times been depoliticized and presented as a problem of science and funding. By closely considering the local adaptation of global approaches, partnerships are rendered as a process which is surrounded by controversy and pressures in multiple governance contexts. Subsequently, even 'weak implementation contexts', or 'areas of limited statehood', are not mere target contexts for global approaches. Rather they give rise to locally adapted approaches, by renegotiating and contesting global governance approaches.

List of interviews Chapter 8

- John Watkin, Conservation International, Arlington (VA), 11 February 2008.
- Lauren Kelly, World Bank Headquarters, Washington DC, 11 February 2008.

- Li Ling, regional director WWF, Chengdu, 17 April 2010.
- Li Zhang, Conservation International China, Beijing, 7 September 2009.
- Yang Fangyi, officer at Shanshui Conservation Center, Beijing, 30 July 2012.
- Chen Yongsong, director at Econetwork, Lijiang, 9 April 2010

9 Conclusion

9.1 Overview

This thesis began with the observation that partnerships have emerged in global sustainability politics as an instrument to better achieve implementation of agreements on sustainable development. Scholars have argued that partnerships could succeed where governments falter (Reinicke 1998, Witte, Reinicke, and Benner 2000). This theoretical argument found traction in 2002, when Partnerships for Sustainable Development were adopted as an official outcome of the World Summit for Sustainable Development. The majority of scholarly and policy contributions seem to make (often plausible) cases for and against partnerships. There are those who vest much hope in Partnerships for Sustainable Development as a more solutions-oriented, and more inclusive form of sustainability governance (UN 2002b). According to some, partnerships could effectively address deficits relating to norm-setting, implementation and legitimacy in global governance (Haas 2004), by engaging nongovernmental actors partnerships could also improve democratic quality in existing sustainability governance (Bäckstrand 2005, 2008). Others have taken strong stances against partnerships as they potentially undermine public authority and state capacity (Litzinger 2006, FOE 2003, Van der Wel 2004); distract from intergovernmental decision-making (Hens and Nath 2003); and allow corporations to

green-wash their images while continuing business as usual (FOE 2003).

The vast majority of empirical research, however, cannot vindicate the role of partnerships in global sustainability governance. The small-n and single case approach based studies (e.g. Altenstetter 1994, Gillies 1998, Selin 1999) that dominate research on partnerships in sustainability governance effectively illustrate the possible roles of partnerships, but often suffer from selection biases. Selected cases are often the most visible and successful partnerships, leading to an overly positive verdict on partnerships (Pattberg et al. 2012, 5). Moreover, there is a tendency to emphasize the 'newness' that partnerships bring into governance (i.e. Bassett 1996, Hartman and Stafford 1997, Arts and Tatenhove 2000, Apostolakis and Smith 2003), ostensibly ushering in a new and alternative global governance. However, newness can only be understood against particular political contexts in which partnerships emerge and operate. Most literature on Partnerships for Sustainable Development primarily discusses partnerships in terms of their contribution to global governance (Steets 2005, Ivanova 2002, Bäckstrand 2006a, b), however, the influence and role of partnerships on global governance cannot be extrapolated to their domestic application. For instance, the growing engagement of transnational actors in global governance is not necessarily matched by similar engagement in domestic and local governance (Friedman 1999, Chowdhury 2009, 2011). Subsequently, even when Partnerships for Sustainable Development were designated as universal instruments that could be applied across political, cultural,

social and economic contexts, their global diffusion and adaptation to specific implementation contexts cannot be assumed.

This dissertation aimed to fill two gaps in present partnership scholarship. First, by applying a large-n approach to partnerships, it vindicated overall emergence patterns and effects of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development ¹⁰⁹. Second, this dissertation investigated the political context of partnerships in sustainability governance, both in global and in domestic governance. To this end the research focused on the question:

Why did Partnerships for Sustainable Development emerge in global sustainability governance; how were they adapted to domestic governance contexts; and what has their impact been on global and domestic governance?

This multifaceted inquiry of Partnerships for Sustainable Development features an iterative research approach, combining large-n database analyses with qualitative approaches. The iterative approach could also be interpreted as an extensive case selection process. Large-n analyses provided with an aggregated view of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process, while more specific datasets and one specific case were analyzed to examine the adaptation of partnerships to specific implementation contexts, in particular in China. The focus on the Chinese implementation context

¹⁰⁹ This aspect of the present thesis is related to the collaborative work within the research group on Partnerships for Sustainable Development at the Institute for Environmental Studies of VU University Amsterdam (see Biermann et al. 2007, Pattberg et al. 2012).

in the second part of this dissertation added an important geographic dimension to the inquiry. It not only illustrated the fact that even global partnerships are geographically delimited, but it also supplements the few studies dedicated partnerships in China's sustainable development (Adams, Young, and Zhihong 2006, Cheng and Wang 2009). While previous studies have speculated on the potential of partnerships in China, the present study on partnerships in China went beyond a discussion of potential and constraints by observing actual adaptation patterns of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China.

This concluding chapter presents the key findings of the empirical chapters; and reflects on what – considering the key findings – is to be expected of partnership processes in global sustainability governance. This chapter ends with suggestions towards a future research agenda.

9.2 Key findings

This research was structured along two successive lines of inquiry; the first was related to partnerships in the context of global governance; the second was related to partnerships in domestic implementation contexts, in particular the Indian and Chinese implementation contexts. They aimed to answer three questions that the main research question is comprised of.

- Why did Partnerships for Sustainable Development emerge in global sustainability governance?

- How were partnerships adapted to domestic governance contexts?
- What is the impact of partnerships on global and domestic sustainability governance?

9.2.1 Emergence

Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 of this thesis addressed the question of the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in global sustainability governance. These chapters respectively addressed institutionalist theories of the emergence of partnerships, the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development as a political process, and how and whether the institutionalization of partnerships in global sustainable development led to the emergence of partnerships in the Chinese implementation context.

The emergence of partnerships is often explained on institutional grounds although these arguments have rarely been put to the test. Chapter 2 systematically discussed and assessed functionalist institutionalism, network theories and theories of new institutionalism against empirical patterns in the set of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. The analysis revealed considerable discrepancies between theories and actual patterns of emergence. For instance, partnerships do not emerge where functional deficits are greatest; nor does the emergence of partnerships feature a certain institutionalized model of organizational best practice. Furthermore, while policy network perspectives rightly predict that higher concentrations of potential partners coincide with a higher

number of partnerships, specific political circumstances seem to provide a credible alternative explanation. Overall, this analysis demonstrates the limits of governance perspectives that emphasize the institutional nature of the emergence of partnerships. The diversity and range of institutionalist perspectives reflects a lively discussion on the emergence of partnerships, but also a lack of explanatory power to account for actual patterns of emergence. Most significantly, institutional theories tend to neglect the political contingency of the emergence of partnerships. Accordingly, one of the findings in this thesis is the fact that the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development does not primarily reflect international institutionalization, rather the process seems to be politically informed. For instance, the emergence of a relatively high number of partnerships in Indonesia and South Africa, the respective governments of which hosted the WSSD process, is indicative of the reputational stake the respective governments had vested in a positive diplomatic outcome. While structural and institutional conditions (such as institutional connectedness, markets, and gaps in governance) matter, partnerships also respond to political considerations. Analytically, this poses a challenge, since the emergence of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process as an institution is difficult to tell apart from the political contestations surrounding it. In order to better understand the political nature of partnerships, Chapter 3 elaborated on the 'politics of partnerships', highlighting the political contestations surrounding the negotiation of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process, and the political use of partnerships. The discussion of

politics of partnership highlights the interconnectedness of partnerships with other institutions and policies. While partnerships were intended to widen participation and to ensure support for developing countries in their efforts to implement aspects of sustainable development, they also opened a space for some countries to avoid new binding agreements. Moreover, delegations from developing countries became suspicious of partnerships as they could result in loss of bilateral assistance and loss of sovereignty over issues of sustainable development. Conflicting suggestions by different delegations as to how partnerships should be defined and institutionalized into the UN system have led to a weak institutional framing of partnerships. Subsequent to the WSSD, few additional resources were made available, neither was a strong mandate accorded to the UNCSO to monitor or steer the partnerships process. The flexible nature of partnerships and the lack of criteria of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process rendered partnerships particularly prone to the preferences of already powerful actors in the politics of sustainable development. However, the weak institutionalization of Partnerships for Sustainable Development also meant that partnerships were relatively adaptable and unproblematic to be diffused across different implementation contexts. Indeed, the international agreement on partnerships as implementation instruments in global sustainability governance led to the diffusion of more partnership operations into nearly all countries.

The weak institutionalization of partnerships and the relative ease of their diffusion, raises the question how such institutionalization

relates to the emergence of partnerships domestically. Partnerships for Sustainable Development explicitly aim to achieve global sustainable development through implementation activities in countries of implementation. The analysis in chapter 5 suggests that the direct influence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development on the emergence of partnerships in China is limited. Individual Partnerships for Sustainable Development almost never focused exclusively on China, and most partnerships did not build networks within China. Within the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process, the participation by Chinese actors is low, and targets and timeframes were linked to global and regional priorities rather than national and local ones. The limited domestic effects of the institutionalization of Partnerships for Sustainable Development may cast a critical light on UN sustainable development processes, in particular on large conferences. However, a mere focus on official outcomes of these processes, such as Partnerships for Sustainable Development, masks the influence of transnational interactions which may change the conditions for partnerships in domestic implementation contexts in indirect ways (see 9.2.3).

9.2.2 Adaptation

The diffusion of Partnerships for Sustainable Development is not only a macro-political process of international negotiations. Rather, the diffusion of partnerships into domestic governance depends on international and transnational channels of transmission; domestic structures; and the flexibility of (individual) partnerships. Partnerships for Sustainable Development should not be regarded as

an isolated phenomenon in global politics but also as a domestic and local phenomenon. Indeed, the weak institutionalization of partnerships in the UN system gives rise to the question how partnerships adapt to specific implementation contexts. This thesis addressed the question of adaptation at two levels. First, a meso-level analysis of a set of partnerships in certain implementation contexts rendered a better understanding of how partnerships are reconfigured to different countries of implementation (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7). Second, a micro-level, or intra-partnership, analysis was conducted to better understand organizational, strategic and operational adjustments of partnerships in specific implementation contexts (Chapter 8).

For the meso-level analysis, China and India were investigated as implementation contexts for Partnerships for Sustainable development. China's implementation context does not seem the most enabling one for partnerships given structural constraints, such as a heavily regulated field of social organizations, a lack of experience with collaborative governance, and a relatively new and rapidly developing institutional context (see Chapter 6). At the WSSD, the Chinese delegation was particularly skeptical about Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Nonetheless, China features relatively often as a country of implementation in the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process; no less than 55 partnerships report implementation activities in China. By observing participatory constellations, geographic scopes, thematic scopes, and attributed functions within the set of partnerships implementing in China, a prevalent model for partnerships emerges. Most partnerships in

China feature a participatory constellation with many foreign actors, without domestic NGOs; they are administered from abroad; and feature global or regional scopes. This prevalent model seems reasonably effective, in the sense that partnerships that operate in China produce more relevant outputs than the global average. For many partnerships, it seems to make sense to develop activities in China because of the scale and urgency of China's many sustainability challenges. Moreover, partnerships may benefit from China's relatively developed infrastructure and stable government. However, the prevalent model of partnership also indicates that, generally, Partnerships for Sustainable Development are not embedded in China's sustainability governance. Rather than 'Chinese partnerships', Partnerships for Sustainable Development are 'partnerships in China'. Even if they are producing relevant outputs, there is little evidence that 'best practices' are scaled up, or that they lead to more fundamental reforms in China's sustainability governance.

The meta-level analysis of the adaptation of partnerships in specific implementation contexts continued with a comparative study of India and China (Chapter 7). This study highlights implementation contexts as a key explanatory factor in the adaptation of partnerships by contrasting two very different political and institutional environments. The subsets of partnerships were selected because of the many dissimilarities between the Indian and Chinese political and institutional contexts. While China lacks political pluralism and real influence for citizens, India's implementation context features more political pluralism, and relative freedom and autonomy of civil

society. These contrasts are reflected in the strategies, organizations and operations of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. While some partnerships exclusively aim at sustainable development in India, very few aim exclusively at China. Moreover, partnerships involve more domestic partners in India than in China. In fact, most Partnerships for Sustainable Development operating in China are not actually organized as partnerships in China, rather involving only one Chinese partner. Most partnerships in China therefore take the form of bilateral cooperation projects that link individual organizations in China to larger international networks. Partnerships in India feature more civil society organizations and fewer local government agencies as partners in comparison to partnerships in China. These differences indicate disparate relations between partnerships and governments. In India partnerships are sometimes antagonistic towards government, while a larger number of partnerships in China are designed to support government functions. Even in the support of government functions most partnerships in China do not aim at widening political participation by engaging civil society organizations. The comparison of the Indian and Chinese implementation contexts for partnerships demonstrates that developing countries are not mere 'target countries'. Implementation contexts are political contentious arenas rather than the passive contexts for institutional innovations. Consequently, the diffusion of governance across implementation contexts should be understood as multiple processes of adaptation to specific implementation contexts.

Finally, (micro-level) adaptation within particular partnerships, was investigated in Chapter 8. Partnerships are subject to continued adaptation and reformulation, even when their strategies have been defined and agreed upon in the context of global sustainability governance. This study demonstrates how a Partnership for Sustainable Development adapted to the Chinese implementation context. The choice for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) was informed by the fact that it represented one of the very few Partnerships for Sustainable Development that promote local partnership networks in China. A closer examination revealed that the CEPF significantly adapted its approach in China in terms of organization, strategies and operations. Some of these adaptations even contradicted CEPF's global approach; in particular the redefinition of civil society and the funding of government agencies were contrary to CEPF's global approach. Through the adaptation of its global approach, the CEPF gained substantive meaning in China's biodiversity governance, in particular by facilitating a closer association between science and policy makers.

9.2.3 Impacts

This thesis mainly focused on answering three questions regarding governance impacts: whether partnerships lead to more effective global sustainability governance; whether partnerships extend global modes of governance into domestic implementation contexts; and, how global transnational engagement through partnerships affect governance and transnational engagement domestically.

Effectiveness of global sustainability governance

Partnerships have been assigned a role in the implementation of sustainable development related international agreements and policies. They allegedly complement existing international institutions, and address governance deficits (Haas 2004). To substantiate claims about more coherent governance, better implementation and greater inclusiveness, Chapter 4 presented a study into the overall effects of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. In theory partnerships could set norms when governments fail to devise them. However, the database analyses indicate that partnerships do necessarily not operate in policy areas where there is a lack of institutionalization; rather, partnerships address areas that are already regulated and institutionalized. Regarding implementation, Partnerships for Sustainable Development could contribute to implementation by increasing capacities for global sustainable development, for instance by mobilizing funds, by developing physical operations locally, and by focusing on the least developed countries. However, most partnerships report a lack of financial means, and have generated little funding that is genuinely new. Moreover, rather than focusing on more direct, technical and local implementation, most partnerships focus on building networks and knowledge management. This results in a parallel bureaucratic procedural universe, which may lead to better implementation on the long run, though this is far from certain. Finally, partnerships do not necessarily focus on the least developed countries. Leadership of partnerships generally remains in the hands of partners based in

developed countries. Regarding the potential of partnerships to increase participation of nongovernmental actors, database analyses indicate that Partnerships for Sustainable Development remain predominantly led by public actors (governments and intergovernmental organizations) and generally failed to include marginalized stakeholder groups (such as farmers, unions, indigenous peoples, women, and youth). Partnerships therefore seem to reproduce some patterns of political exclusion in multilateral sustainability governance.

In sum, the study of the overall effects of Partnerships for Sustainable Development on global sustainable development does not lead to a clear role definition of partnerships in global governance. While they are rhetorically linked to norm setting, implementation and participation, in practice, Partnerships for Sustainable Development do not live up to promises of effectiveness.

Extending global governance

While proponents argue that partnerships lead to more effective, legitimate, and comprehensive governance, critics of neoliberal globalization argue quite the opposite. Both arguments imply a certain embedding of partnerships into existing governance, or 'partnership governance', a mode of governance that features generalized patterns of involvement of non-state actors through partnerships. However, this does not need to be the case. Governments are not always welcoming of transnational (often foreign-led) partnerships. Moreover, many partnerships primarily seek the attainment of narrowly defined targets, rather than

governance reform at large. Only a few in the larger set of registered Partnerships for Sustainable Development attempt at reconfiguring governance in domestic and local implementation contexts. Chapter 8 presented an analysis of adaptation patterns within such a partnership to determine whether it has become institutionally embedded and to which extent such embedding reflects features of neoliberal governance.

The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) is one of the earliest and largest transnational biodiversity conservation partnerships operating in China, moreover it is also one of the very few that explicitly seeks to reconfigure governance. As a funding mechanism, the CEPF fits the notion of a neoliberal partnership as it diverts international finance towards private transactions, effectively allowing international funds to circumvent national treasuries. Furthermore, CEPF's approach to biodiversity governance also reflects neoliberal understandings of governance. By emphasizing biogeographic areas, the CEPF downplays the political geography of state-centered governance approaches. Furthermore, its interventions are aimed at empowering civil society and private actors in order to substitute state-centered approaches with solutions-oriented and apolitical management approaches. While CEPF's approach towards biodiversity conservation has occasionally been referred to as 'anti-government' (Litzinger 2006) and neoliberal (Duffy 2008), it seems unlikely that governments would unconditionally host CEPF operations and accept open challenges to their sovereignty. CEPF's activities cannot solely rest on self-formulated strategies and approaches because domestic operations

are not the function of the mere transposing a global conservation approaches. Rather domestic approaches are also a function of negotiations and subsequent adaptations to the domestic implementation context. In China, government authorities effectively brought the treasury back in CEPF's financial transactions by insisting on approval by the Ministry of Finance of China. Of three identified biodiversity hotspots in China, only the Mountains of Southwest China (MSW) was approved. The MSW hotspot completely falls within Chinese jurisdiction (as opposed to the other hotspots), allowing for adaptations specific for the Chinese implementation context. Inter alia, the CEPF permitted programmatic influence by provincial government agencies and a redefinition of civil society. The latter took shape in an inclusive understanding which accommodated a wider range of possible grantees, including individuals, research institutes, universities and even local government agencies. In its strategic adaptation to the Chinese implementation context, the CEPF contradicted its own civil-society-only approach, which explicitly denies support to state agencies. Rather than exclusively seeking to strengthen the capacities of domestic civil society, the adapted strategy equally focused on strengthening local government capacities. A subsequent portfolio analyses confirmed that strategic adaptations were not mere rhetoric. International rather than domestic NGOs coordinated grant projects. Moreover, civil society capacity building received only a small share of total allocations, while government agencies received a similar allocation for capacity building. For instance, the CEPF funds were directed towards the reinforcement park guards' policing

powers, in particular through the equipment of security rooms, the employment of veteran soldiers, and the use of satellite data. Subsequently, a partnership governance network emerged which featured increased government capacities and a greater facilitating role for science and research in decision-making rather than a broad civil society alliance. In fact, CEPF refers to 'science-based decision making' to as its most important legacy in China's biodiversity governance.

In sum, CEPF's generalized approach might feature a neoliberal outlook on governance. However, governance impacts cannot be assessed by observing intentions and self-proclamations. Rather, assessments should be made on the basis of empirical observations of implementation activities. The analysis of CEPF's operations in China demonstrates that the impact on governance is an amalgam of influences from global and domestic governance. As Partnerships for Sustainable Development attempt to reconfigure governance they also need to adapt to specific implementation contexts. The CEPF navigated between two somewhat contradictory partnership approaches, one of which excludes the state and employs a narrow definition of civil society, and another one, which intensively collaborates with the state and employs an expanded definition of civil society. Observed governance impacts reflect more of the latter approach.

Transnational linkages

While transnational engagement is more than a feature of international or supranational politics, few studies have focused on

the impact of global transnational engagement on transnational engagement domestically (Friedman 1999, Chowdhury 2011). To address this gap in current literature, this thesis explored how transnational engagement in global governance relates to the development of transnational actors in domestic implementation contexts (Chapter 5 and Chapter 8). Findings suggest that mutually reinforcing dynamics exist between global civil society engagement and parts of China's civil society, while other parts of civil society are not so much empowered. The case of the CEPF in China demonstrated how large international NGOs were allocated a majority of grants and coordinating positions, while the role of local people, domestic and local NGOs remained relatively marginalized. This finding is especially remarkable because the CEPF explicitly aims to develop local civil society and to alleviate poverty. Moreover, the CEPF strengthened the role of scientists through 'science-based biodiversity conservation'. Scientists were accorded crucial roles in the design of CEPF's China investment, moreover, they were involved in policy planning with local and provincial governments. Such participation in policy making is likely to continue as a longer term feature in the governance of China's biodiversity hotspots. Maps of hotspot areas have been integrated into provincial conservation plans, suggesting the input and the involvement of scientists on the longer term¹¹⁰. The findings convey the idea that global transnational

¹¹⁰ According to Bruno Latour (2007, 90-133) objects – in particular maps – should be seen as actors as they represent associations. Objects can assume associational activity, e.g. maps assume (previous) association between map makers, mapping instruments, paper, etc. The inclusion of biodiversity maps

engagement empowers some transnational actors in domestic governance, while some patterns of exclusion of social groups (e.g. local people and local civil society) persist.

Chapter 5, demonstrated that the direct effect of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process on the emergence of partnerships in China is limited. Nonetheless UN summits and transnational interactions have strengthened the position of some parts of China's civil society, including some domestic NGOs. Most notably, the relation between international and domestic NGOs has been changing from a dependency to an interdependency. Some Chinese NGOs have become more professional, gaining equal footing with their international peers, while international NGOs turn their attention towards their Chinese colleagues as China becomes more important in global sustainability governance. The relation between Chinese NGOs and business is also changing. While collaborative arrangements between companies and Chinese are still uncommon, the number of initiatives is growing. Chinese NGOs try to find (funding) partners among (Chinese and foreign) businesses as bilateral assistance is drying up while the more ambitious among Chinese businesses are taking up responsibilities beyond immediate profit making. Finally, the relation between government and NGOs has changed. While Chinese civil society organizations are subject to severe restrictions, the need for control as perceived by the Chinese government has been decreasing as NGOs exert self-control and

in provincial plans assumes associations between provincial governments, the CEPF and scientists, but also makes the repetition of such associations more likely, as maps need updating, data input, interpretation, etcetera.

redefine their roles alongside government priorities. At the same time, government officials have become more familiar with cross-sector collaboration. Occasionally individual government agencies will even ally themselves with NGOs, for instance to improve their positions vis-à-vis other government agencies (Johnson 2009).

9.3 The future of Partnerships for Sustainable Development

This dissertation demonstrated that the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development was a politically contingent process, rather than the result of an ongoing process of (functionalist) institutionalization. Without clear guidance, the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process was prone to be coopted by particular interests, for instance from certain industries and corporations to green wash their activities (see Chapter 3). Without a clear mandate to disprove the registration or deregister partnerships, the UNCSD indiscriminately handed out UN stamps of approval. The UNCSD lost control over Partnerships for Sustainable Development as an implementation device. Many partnerships failed at achieving their self-formulated goals. According to GSPD analysis, by June 2008 only 37.6 per cent of all Partnerships for Sustainable Development had a function-output fit, 62.4 per cent partially or completely failed to produce the necessary outputs (e.g. curriculums and seminars) to achieve their declared goals (e.g. training) (Pattberg et al. 2012). Rather than a repository of 'best-practices', the Partnerships for

Sustainable Development process features more unfulfilled promises.

It is clear that the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process is in need of reform (see also Pattberg et al. 2012, 245). Revised guidelines for Partnerships for Sustainable Development should specify reporting and monitoring requirements, establish protocols and specify procedures, and also stipulate which types of partnerships qualify for registration¹¹¹. The coordinating agency at the UN¹¹² should be permitted to assess whether registered partnerships, on the whole, are in line with sustainable development policy goals, such as the MDGs. For this purpose, the coordinating agency should have the mandate to remove partnerships when they fail to provide proofs of activity. These proofs could take the form of regular reporting, but could also consist of external validation by the coordinating agency at the UN or by external reviewers. The reinforced coordinating role of the coordinating agency at the UN, moreover, implies the allocation of additional financial and administrative means.

At the Rio+20 conference, however, governments again failed to agree on improvements to the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process. A Partnerships Forum at Rio+20 reportedly “ignited the enthusiasm, commitment and leadership of different stakeholders to continue to strengthen partnerships in the follow up

¹¹¹ For instance, Chapter 3 described how the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process provided with a platform to launch controversial technologies are sustainable.

¹¹² At Rio+20, Members States agreed on a high level political forum to replace the UNCSD.

of the conference” (UN 2012c), but the role of partnerships in a reformed sustainability division remained unspecified. In fact, the Rio+20 document ‘the Future We Want’ (UN 2012a) merely restated a commitment to partnerships without suggesting reforms. Attention rather focused on ‘voluntary commitments’(UN 2012b), a comparatively obscure term as partnerships at least allude to a certain type of organization and a certain participatory quality. Moreover the interest in Partnerships for Sustainable Development has declined; since 2002 every year fewer partnerships registered with the UNCSD. From the lack of progress in the Rio+20 conference, indeed since the 2002 WSSD, it becomes clear that a continuous institutionalization of partnerships in the UN system cannot be assumed. This process could even backslide, for instance, if Partnerships for Sustainable Development are replaced by voluntary commitments. Regarding the institutionalization of partnerships in the UN system, however, the development of Partnerships for Sustainable Development is not the only indicator. Not only are there similar processes in the UN, for instance the UN Global Compact (UN 2011, Ruggie 2001), but future partnership processes are currently being tabled for sub-domains of sustainable development. The UNFCCC’s Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) has for example been working on a framework to acknowledge ‘International Cooperative Initiatives’ that complement multilateral efforts in mitigating and abating the harmful effects of global climate change (UNFCCC 2013). While this process has hitherto received scant scholarly attention, international cooperative initiatives could play an important role as a ‘practical and

results-oriented approach' to raising levels of ambition in climate governance.

This dissertation did not exclusively explore the relation between partnerships and global sustainability politics, rather it traced partnership operations in domestic implementation contexts. In this regard, the institutionalization of partnerships in global sustainability governance may not directly impact the development of partnerships domestically. In fact, partnership processes may be predominantly a domestic or even local phenomenon; many partnerships may not seek registration with the UNCSD, or they may not try to relate their aims to global sustainable development policies and targets. While the sample of partnerships in this thesis is not representative of a larger universe of partnerships in domestic and local governance, the comparison of partnerships across domestic implementation contexts demonstrated that some countries make for better governance contexts for partnerships than others. In China, for example, relations between registered NGOs, businesses and government are shifting (see Chapter 5), creating better circumstances for multi-stakeholder partnerships. Within the sample of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, those that operate in China reported more outputs that fit their declared functions than the global average. More importantly, Partnerships for Sustainable Development have undergone adaptations in the Chinese implementation context which resulted in prevalent models partnerships in China that are distinguishable from partnerships in different implementation contexts. While the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process only limitedly impacted on China's

sustainability governance directly, it inspired partnership initiatives such as the China Going Green Dialogue. Chinese partnership initiatives at large sustainable development conferences may be the stirrings of a looming partnership governance in China. Indeed, Chinese civil society organizations, and increasingly also corporations, build collaborative arrangements as they follow the example of their international peers in UN processes. Nonetheless, the application of partnerships in China's sustainable development is not merely a function of transposing partnership operations or copying ideas. The present study indicated that effectiveness of partnerships should also be understood in terms of adaptability and responsiveness to the immediate geographic and political implementation contexts for partnerships. By rigidly applying global approaches, partnerships risk ignoring domestic implementation contexts as transnational political arenas with existing political agents and institutions. In the case of China, partnerships featured close collaboration between research and science institutions and (local) government, which befitted China's overall strategy towards a 'scientific outlook on development' (Zhu 2006) rather than a drive towards the development of civil society.

Finally, because the development of partnerships in domestic implementation contexts is only limitedly related to the institutionalization of partnerships in the global environmental governance one might ask whether continued institutionalization of partnerships into the UN system matters. Continued institutionalization of partnerships into the UN system could lead to a better control of a set of registered partnerships and a better

coordination of operations in line with global sustainable development agreements. However, a strictly formulated Partnerships for Sustainable Development process may represent a functional-institutionalist top-down view of sustainability politics, which tends to ignore the diversity of governance contexts. Moreover, partnerships that rigidly apply global approaches across dissimilar implementation contexts will meet contestation in domestic and local implementation contexts. Their approaches may not be applied to a greater scale or last beyond the duration of the operation of a partnership. Consequently, the impact of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process will be very limited beyond the narrow operations of registered partnerships. Partnerships should not only be defined by the need to meet gaps in global sustainability governance, by global approaches, and, be accountable to the UN. A defining feature of partnerships is their flexibility (in terms of their organizational features, the roles in governance they seek to fulfill, etcetera) to better fit specific implementation contexts. Their adaptability is not only necessary but also their strength, rendering them applicable across a wide variety of implementation contexts. Therefore, a discussion of stricter guidelines should also take into account possible trade-offs in terms of adaptability and responsiveness in local and domestic implementation contexts. The future of partnerships does not depend on their precise definition at the UN, but on whether and how patterns of participation on non-state actors in sustainability governance are established in specific governance contexts. The fact that partnerships seem to have adapted relatively well to the Chinese

governance context – even when China does not seem the most favorable context for multi-stakeholder collaborations – speaks for the responsiveness and adaptability of partnerships across implementation contexts.

9.4 Suggested research and concluding thoughts

Even if interest in Partnerships for Sustainable Development is volatile, transnational networks, and collaborative arrangements remain important features in a multifaceted and complex global sustainability governance, which has also been described as ‘earth system governance’ (Biermann 2005, Biermann et al. 2012). A governance perspective befits the study of partnerships because partnerships effectively embody shifts in governance (Kersbergen and Waarden 2004); they bring in new actors; they deploy new governance norms and methods; as they seek to address sustainability challenges. A governance perspective of partnerships, moreover, emphasizes the fact that partnerships are linked to larger political institutional contexts, rendering a view of the embeddedness of partnerships within a wider net of global and domestic institutions. The emergence of partnerships is therefore not an isolated process but a manifestation of changes in global governance. At the same time, it is important to take into account the limits of a governance perspective of partnerships. Governance scholars generally accord great importance to institutions, occasionally leading to an overemphasis of the institutional nature of human behavior and social change. Subsequently, the role of politics

may be downplayed. Moreover, a governance perspective may lead to a false impression of a comprehensively regulated and structured world, where it is in fact asymmetric across policy areas and geographies (Dingwerth and Pattberg 2010). Finally, governance scholars' concern with newness – new actors, institutions, mechanisms -may lead to a relative disregard of existing systems of rule.

This study of partnerships tried to remedy some potential drawbacks of a governance perspective by focusing on specific implementation contexts that reconnect shifts in governance through partnerships with existing systems of rule. While most studies of Partnerships for Sustainable Development limit their discussion to a global level or international politics, this study discussed partnerships in specific political contexts, specific geographies and policy areas. This exercise shows that partnerships, as the outcome of an intergovernmental process, are politically contested; that global governance is geographically asymmetric. Moreover, partnerships do not only reflect newness in global politics, but they interact with existing systems of rules and 'traditional governance'. By focusing on specific geographies and policy areas (in particular biodiversity conservation in China), this study demonstrated that even global partnerships are ultimately geographically and thematically defined as they operate in local environments and on specific topics. The research conveyed the overall idea that an understanding of partnerships in global governance is incomplete without a careful reckoning of their adaptation to specific implementation contexts and does not warrant

more generalizing conclusions towards the emergence of partnerships or their impacts on governance.

The current dissertation helped to lay a groundwork for research on the effects and the outcomes of global sustainability partnerships in specific implementation contexts. Research should be extended across thematic policy areas and governance contexts. The current research has focused in-depth on biodiversity conservation, partly because it is a relatively new policy area in China, which allows more opportunities for governance experiments beyond traditional state-dominated approaches. However, this also raises the question whether and how partnerships would affect policy areas that are more institutionalized and that are considered higher priorities by the Government of China. Continued research that would e.g. link global governance, climate policy and climate partnerships would be interesting in this regard, because it would allow the comparison between more and less institutionalized policy areas in China, and explore the effect of different degrees of (formal) institutionalization on the development of partnerships in China.

While the current study has provided some insights on the adaptation of global partnerships within China, and to a lesser extent India, currently there are few studies that link transnational partnership processes in global governance to specific implementation contexts (exceptions are Roch, Wilkening, and Hart 2007, Friedman 1999, Chowdhury 2009, 2011). Hitherto most studies consider partnerships either on an individual basis (through case studies), or as a phenomenon in multilateral sustainability governance. Continued research on the adaptation of global

partnerships could demonstrate how partnerships reflect governance norms, culture and forms of organization that are particular to specific governance contexts. This would be a valuable addition to liberal institutionalist understandings, which regard partnerships as primarily reflective of global norms. That extension of the research of global partnerships into specific governance contexts would, moreover, provide accumulative insights into partnerships as a phenomenon manifesting at different layers of global governance.

I would furthermore suggest continued research on partnerships in the context of emerging countries (in particular India, Brazil, Russia, and China), as these countries are becoming new drivers of sustainability governance (Humphrey and Messner 2006). The most recent UN summits on sustainable development (WSSD and Rio+20) have been criticized for their disappointing outcomes in terms of new international agreements, targets and time schedules (Andresen 2012). To some extent these outcomes are reflective of a changing world. Former 'second-movers' in environmental governance are now becoming drivers. Western-shaped global governance and new non-western drivers of global governance present a challenge of mutual adaptation. In particular, emerging countries are not mere targets for applying global governance instruments such as Partnerships for Sustainable Development. New drivers in sustainability governance are in the position to shape policies and policy instruments in global governance. In the case of the CEPF in China, the Chinese approach was not only adapted for the specific biodiversity hotspot, the approach was also suggested as a model for governing hotspots in other countries.

Finally, the research trajectory for this PhD thesis has inspired me in terms of possible future research topics and new research approaches. I feel privileged for my extended stay in China during the course of this research. In my research on partnerships in China I have come across many activists and scientists, and indeed scientist activists and activist scientists, and occasionally officials and business people who are doing some of the most impressive work in China's sustainable development. To some extent these encounters undercut the assumption in partnership literature that different partners have separate responsibilities. People took responsibilities beyond their professional capacities as they made every effort for the greater good. In my continued research endeavors I want to build on this observation: Behind the few inspiring partnerships I came across, I see people who, urged by their hopes and convictions, invest their energy, time and resources into a more ecological and equitable society.

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Annex 1: Measurement of the 'Function-Output Fit' (FOF)

The measurement of the main dependent variable in the Global Sustainability Partnerships Database (GSPD), the 'function-output fit' (FOF), is almost exclusively derived outside the UNCSD partnerships database. FOF reveals the accuracy and consistency of declarations by partnerships on their goals and functions by comparing these with their actual activities and products (output). To obtain function data, the partnerships research team at VU University Amsterdam studied the UNCSD website, websites of partnerships, and other publications. Data was categorized according to their declared functions (see table below). Up to three declared functions were coded.

Function	Explanation
Knowledge Production	Production of knowledge, information, innovation (scientific or applied)
Knowledge dissemination	Dissemination of knowledge, including dissemination of “good practices”
Technical implementation	Implementation of previously existing technologies, plans, and policies, including pilot projects
Institutional capacity building	Building new social institutions (with or without legal status) or expanding existing organizations
Norm setting	Setting up new norms or standards or spreading the use of such new norms, including the certification of products
Campaigning	Campaigns, including raising public awareness on a given topic, and education of the public at large
Lobbying	Policy oriented pressure by nongovernmental actors on governmental actors
Technology transfer	Transfer of technology and methodology (including the transfer of science-based evaluation or monitoring methods)
Participatory Management	Management towards the greater involvement of local communities in policy making and implementation
Training	Training of employees, students (including school training if a new curriculum is introduced with sustainable development content), and other social actors
Planning	Planning at national or regional levels (including the production of large policy plans, development or planning of policy instruments)

Subsequently, different types of output (e.g. publications, trainings, fund raising, to technology transfer) were conceptualized. Each partnership was coded according to these types of output (see table below).

Annex 2: List of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China

Code	Explanation
OUT_PUB	Publications (research, advocacy, standards, training, policy and reports); documents found on the Internet and at partnership meetings pertaining to:
_RES	Research- Any publication by the partnership (not by individual partners) documenting academic research, data-gathering for implementation and policy, and action research.
_ADV	Advocacy and Public awareness-raising - any publication by the partnership (not by individual partners) arguing in favor of the partnership cause with a wider audience than policy-makers (public); campaign material, newsletters, petitions, and promotion material (posters, leaflets, brochures).
_STA	Standards- any publication by the partnership (not by individual partners) setting out policy and/or procedural standards (except internal operating procedures) for application to a sustainable development issue.
_TRA	Training- any publication by the partnership (not by individual partners) aimed at training, including best practice manuals; and instruction materials.
_POL	Policy- any publication by the partnership (not by individual partners) arguing for specific policies (whether regional, national, or trans-national) with policy-makers (public) to regulate and manage sustainable development issues.
_REP	Self-Reports- any publication by the partnership (not by individual partners) pertaining transparency and accountability towards the partners, stakeholders and wider audiences (such as annual reports, and evaluations of the partnership).
_OTH	Other publications.
OUT_DTB	Database and systematically organized retrievable information (except databases of self-reports).
OUT_WSC	Workshops/seminars/conferences including training seminars, exhibitions, stakeholder consulting events and courses organized by the partnership (excluding events organized during the WSSD).
OUT_ITT	Infrastructure and technology transfer: construction or improvement of new and existing physical facilities as well as the application and transfer of new technologies (including the

	exchange of grassroots innovations).
OUT_WBS	Website: an active and operational website.
OUT_CNS	Consultancy service (excludes implementation).
OUT_PRT	Conference and workshop participation (excluding conferences and workshops organized by the partnership or the UNCSD, WSSD processes).
OUT_NEW	New institutions, organizations and new partnerships.
OUT_OTHER	Other activities and fundraising.

Finally, fifteen types of outputs and eleven functions were linked, on the logical basis that the presence of a specific output would indicate at least partial fulfillment of the related functions (table below)

Function	Fitting Outputs			
Knowledge Production	_PUB_RES	_DTB		
Knowledge dissemination	_PUB_TRA	_DTB	_WSC	_PRT
Technical implementation	_ITT			
Institutional capacity building	_PUB_TRA	_WSC	_NEW	
Norm setting	_PUB_STA			
Campaigning	_PUB_AD V	_WSC		
Lobbying	_PUB_POL	_PRT		
Technology transfer	_PUB_TRA	_WSC	_ITT	_CNS
Participatory Management	_PUB_REP	_WSC		
Training	_WSC			
Planning	_PUB_POL	_WSC	_CNS	_PRT

Annex 2: List of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China

1	APEC Energy Working Group Energy for Sustainable Development: The Contribution and Role of the APEC Energy Working Group”
2	Asia CDM Capacity Building Initiative
3	Asia Forest Partnership (AFP)
4	Asian-Pacific Coastal Zone Environment Assessment (CEACUZ)
5	Asia-Pacific Environmental Innovation Strategy Project (APEIS)
6	Asia-Pacific Network on Climate Change (AP-net)
7	Clean Air Initiative for Asian Cities (CAI-Asia)
8	Collaborative Labelling and Appliance Standards Program (CLASP)
9	Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF)
10	Earth Charter Youth Initiative (ECYI)
11	Ecological Sanitation Research (EcoSanRes)
12	Education for Rural People (ERP)
13	Encyclopaedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS)
14	Environmental Law Capacity Building Programme for Sustainable Development
15	Global Ballast Water Management Programme (GloBallast)
16	Global Bioenergy Partnership (GBEP)
17	Global Mapping Partnership Program (Global Mapping)
18	Global Network for Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD)
19	Global Ocean Data Assimilation Experiment (GODAE)
20	Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS)
21	HarvestPlus Challenge Program (HarvestPlus)
22	Institutional Consolidation for Systemic Planning and Management Toward Poverty Alleviation and Environmental Conservation in a framework of Sustainable Region

	Development in the Hindu Kush, Karakorum, Himalaya Mountain Complex (HKKH)
23	International AIDS Education and Training Program
24	International Coral Reef Action Network (ICRAN)
25	International Model Forest Network (IMFN)
26	International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management (IPSRM)
27	International Solar Energy Society (ISES)
28	Local capacity building and training on sustainable urbanization, Unitar Local Development Programme
29	Local Environmental Planning and Management (EPM)
30	Mayors Commitment Program of the Asia Pacific Urban Institute
31	Mekong: A Living Classroom
32	Methane to Markets (M2M)
33	My Community, Our Earth (MyCOE)
34	Network for Sustainable Agriculture (Agle@rn)
35	Partnership for Clean Fuels and Vehicles (PCFV)
36	Partnership for Clean Indoor Air (PCIA)
37	Partnership for Observation of the Global Oceans (POGO)
38	Partnership for the East-Asian Australasian Flyway (EAAF)
39	Partnership for Water Education & Research (PoWER)
40	Partnership Initiatives for Knowledge Network and Capacity Building (APFED)
41	Partnership on Sustainable Low Carbon Transport (SloCat)
42	Partnership on the Program for Developing Mechanisms to Reward the Upland Poor in Asia for Environmental Services They Provide (RUPES)
43	Partnerships in Environmental Management for Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA)
44	Promoting an Energy-efficient Public Sector (PEPS)
45	Public Interest Intellectual Property Advisors (PIIPA)
46	Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP)
47	Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21)
48	SEED Initiative: Supporting Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development (SEED)

Annex 2: List of Partnerships for Sustainable Development in China

49	Sino-Italian Cooperation Program for Environmental Protection
50	Sister Cities Network for Sustainable Development (SCI)
51	Strengthening Science Based Decision Making in Developing Countries
52	Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)
53	US Energy Association Energy Partnership Program (EPP)
54	Water for Asian Cities (UNWAC)
55	World Nuclear University (WNU)

Summary

Overview and main research question

Partnerships have emerged as important instruments in a multifaceted and complex global sustainability governance. At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg more than two hundred partnership initiatives registered as 'Partnership for Sustainable Development', a process which featured as an official outcome of that conference. Commentators are divided over this process. Proponents argue that partnerships effectively address deficits in (state-centered) global sustainability governance, by being solutions-oriented, and by promoting greater inclusiveness of non-state actors. Others have taken a strong stance against partnerships because they ostensibly undermine intergovernmental agreements, challenge public authority, and facilitate the privatization of sustainability governance without the prospect of achieving sustainable development.

The vast majority of empirical research on Partnerships for Sustainable Development however fails to vindicate the role of partnerships in global sustainability governance. Most case studies effectively illustrate the potential and limitations of partnerships, but they also suffer from selection biases. The focus on the most visible partnerships, and the emphasis on the newness (new actors, new approaches, and new coordination mechanisms) they bring into

global governance leads to an exaggerated view that an alternative and better sustainability governance is dawning.

This dissertation fills two gaps in present partnership literature. First, by applying a large-n approach, it vindicates general emergence and effectiveness patterns of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. Second, this dissertation discusses partnerships in specific implementation contexts, rather than discussing them as a feature of multilateral governance. To this end this dissertation focuses on the question:

Why did Partnerships for Sustainable Development emerge in global sustainability governance; how were they adapted to domestic governance contexts; and what has their impact been on global and domestic governance?

The research featured an iterative research approach, combining large-n database analyses with qualitative approaches. Large-n analyses provided with an aggregated view of the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process, while more specific datasets and one specific case were analyzed to examine the adaptation of partnerships to specific implementation contexts.

The second part of this dissertation focuses particularly on the Chinese implementation context for Partnerships for Sustainable Development, adding an important geographic dimension to the inquiry. Therefore, this dissertation also supplements the few dedicated studies on partnerships in China's sustainable development. While most previous studies speculated on the

potential of partnerships in China, the present study goes beyond a discussion of potential and constraints by observing actual adaptation patterns of Partnerships for Sustainable Development.

This dissertation is structured along two successive lines of inquiry; the first is related to partnerships in the context of global governance; the second is related to partnerships in domestic implementation contexts. These lines of inquiry answer three secondary research questions.

- Why did Partnerships for Sustainable Development emerge in global sustainability governance?
- How were partnerships adapted to domestic governance contexts?
- What has been the impact of partnerships on global and domestic sustainability governance?

Key Findings

Emergence

The emergence of partnerships is often explained on institutional grounds although these arguments have rarely been put to the test. A systematic discussion and analysis of different institutionalist theories (Chapter 2) indicates that theoretical assertions are not matched by empirical patterns of emergences in the sample of Partnerships for Sustainable Development. For instance, partnerships do not emerge where functional deficits are greatest, nor do partnerships emerge according to certain organizational models. Rather than reflecting a process of international institutionalization,

the emergence of Partnerships for Sustainable Development seems to be principally informed by political considerations. In order to better understand their political nature, Partnerships for Sustainable Development are studied as a political process (Chapter 3), demonstrating their political ambiguity and their political use. While partnerships were intended to widen participation and ensure support for capacities of developing countries to implement sustainable development, they also opened a space for some countries to avoid new binding agreements. Conflicting suggestions by different delegations as to how partnerships should be institutionalized into the UN system have led to a weak institutional framing. However, the weak institutionalization of Partnerships for Sustainable Development also meant that partnerships were relatively adaptable and unproblematic to diffuse across a great variety of implementation contexts.

The apparent diffusion of Partnerships for Sustainable Development raises the question how their weak institutionalization relates to the emergence of partnerships in domestic implementation contexts. An analysis of the impact of the Partnerships for Sustainability process on the emergence of partnerships in China (Chapter 5) indicates that most partnerships did not build networks within the country. Participation by Chinese actors in Partnerships for Sustainable Development is rather low, and targets and timeframes of partnerships are linked to global and regional priorities rather than national and local ones. The limited direct effects of Partnerships for Sustainable Development on domestic implementation contexts such as China's may cast a critical light on UN sustainable development

processes, however transnational interactions in these processes may change the conditions for partnerships in domestic implementation contexts in indirect ways (see below).

Adaptation

The diffusion of Partnerships for Sustainable Development is not only a multilateral political process. Rather, the diffusion of partnerships into domestic governance depends on international and transnational channels of transmission; domestic structures; and the flexibility of (individual) partnerships. In fact, the weak institutionalization of partnerships in global sustainability governance makes the question how partnerships adapt to specific implementation contexts more salient. In spite of considerable legal, institutional and cultural constraints, a prevalent model of partnership has developed in China's implementation context (Chapter 6). Most partnerships in China feature many foreign actors, few domestic NGOs, foreign based administration, and foci on sustainability issues on a global or regional scale. This prevalent model could be regarded as a relatively successful adaptation of the partnership instrument because partnerships in China produce more relevant outputs than the global average. On the other hand, the prevalent model of partnership also indicates that most partnerships are not embedded in China's sustainability governance – they are partnerships in China rather than Chinese partnerships. By contrasting the Chinese and Indian political and institutional environments (Chapter 7), implementation contexts are furthermore highlighted as key explanatory factors in the adaptation of

partnerships. Differences in the sets indicate disparate relations between partnerships and governments. While in India partnerships are sometimes antagonistic vis-à-vis government, a larger number of partnerships in China are designed to support government functions. Finally, adaptation at the micro-level is investigated in a case study on the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) (Chapter 8), a global biodiversity conservation program and one of the very few that promote the development of local partnerships in China. It demonstrates that the CEPF significantly adapted its approach in China in terms of organization, strategies and operations. Some of these adaptations contradict CEPF's global approach (see below).

Impacts: global sustainability governance

In terms of impacts of Partnerships for Sustainable Development, this thesis focuses on answering three questions: whether partnerships lead to a more effective global sustainability governance; whether partnerships extend global modes of governance; and, how global transnational engagement affects transnational engagement domestically.

The idea that partnerships make global sustainability governance more effective has gained considerable traction within the UN system, but also among governance scholars. To substantiate these effectiveness claims, this thesis presents a study into the overall effects of Partnerships for Sustainable Development (Chapter 4), in particular in terms of norm development, norm implementation and norm inclusiveness. Analyses using the GSPD indicate that Partnerships for Sustainable Development, while rhetorically linked

to norm setting, implementation and participation, in practice do not live up to promises of effectiveness.

Impacts: extending global governance

Critics of neoliberal globalization argue that partnerships are instrumental in the extension of neoliberal governance into developing countries. This dissertation presents an analysis of adaptation patterns within a partnership to determine whether and to which extent these reflected features of international institutionalism and neoliberal governance (Chapter 8). The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is one of the few partnerships that explicitly aim to reconfigure governance in China. As a funding mechanism, the CEPF seems to conform to the notion of a neoliberal partnership as it allows international funds to circumvent national treasuries. Furthermore, CEPF's governance approach emphasizes biogeographic areas, and downplays the political geography of state-centered governance approaches. In China, the CEPF navigated between two somewhat contradictory partnership approaches: one which excludes the state and employs a narrow definition of civil society, and another which intensively collaborates with the state and employs an expanded definition of civil society. The analysis of CEPF's operations in China demonstrates that the impact on governance is an amalgam of influences from global and domestic governance, whereby the latter influence seems to be more important.

Impacts: Transnational linkages

This thesis investigates the impact of global transnational engagement on governance and transnational engagement domestically (Chapter 5 and Chapter 8). Partnerships are commended for facilitating the inclusion of a greater number of political actors, in particular transnational actors. The case of the CEPF in China however demonstrates that different types of transnational actors are unevenly empowered. International NGOs and research organizations were assigned coordinating responsibilities and received most investments. In spite of CEPF's explicit aims to alleviate poverty and to develop local civil society capacity, local people and NGOs did not benefit to the same extent. Rather, some patterns of exclusion (e.g. local people and local civil society) persist in CEPF's governance network. These findings corroborate the conclusions of previous studies in other subject areas (e.g. women's rights) that transnational engagement in global politics does not necessarily impact positively on domestic transnational engagement. Transnational engagement in global politics can even lead to a relative relegation of already marginalized groups.

The study of UN summits and transnational interactions (Chapter 5) indicates that the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process did not lead to the emergence of Chinese sustainability partnerships. However, transnational interactions have an impact on the relation between international and Chinese NGOs, which is increasingly becoming interdependent. Moreover, following the examples of business engagement at UN summits, Chinese NGOs and business

have recently started to collaborate in joint initiatives. The findings suggest that, while the Partnerships for Sustainable Development process does not directly impact on the emergence of partnerships in China, indirect impacts of UN summitry on relations between domestic NGOs, business and government help to bring about better circumstances for partnerships in China.

Suggested research

This research conveys the overall idea that an understanding of partnerships in global governance is incomplete without a careful reckoning of their adaptation to specific implementation contexts. The current dissertation helps to lay a groundwork for research on the effects and the outcomes of global sustainability partnerships in specific implementation contexts. Research should be extended across thematic policy areas and governance contexts.

Samenvatting

Introductie

Partnerschappen zijn een belangrijk instrument in internationaal bestuur en internationale politiek voor duurzame ontwikkeling. Voorstanders van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling, die werden gepresenteerd als officiële uitkomst van de Wereldtop voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling in 2002 in Johannesburg, beweren dat partnerschappen een belangrijke aanvulling zijn op internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek. Zij zijn oplossingsgerichte beleidsinstrumenten die bovendien deelname van niet-statelijke partijen aan duurzaamheidsbeleid mogelijk maken. Critici stellen echter dat partnerschappen internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek ondermijnen, zij leiden de aandacht af van internationale onderhandelingen die nodig zijn om tot nieuwe internationale overeenkomsten te komen. Door het toepassen van partnerschappen wordt duurzaamheidsbeleid bovendien geprivatiseerd zonder dat duurzaamheidsdoelen daadwerkelijk gerealiseerd worden.

Het overgrote deel van bestaand onderzoek richt zich op individuele casussen. Deze casusonderzoeken illustreren potentiële voor- en nadelen van partnerschappen in duurzame ontwikkelingsbeleid, maar zij zijn minder geschikt om de eigenlijke rol van partnerschappen in internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek nader te bepalen. De meeste onderzochte casussen betreffen namelijk de

meest opvallende partnerschappen, die bijvoorbeeld nieuwe methoden en coördinatiemechanismen introduceren. De oververtegenwoordiging van casusonderzoeken naar 'innovatieve' partnerschappen leidt tot een overdreven voorstelling van vernieuwing en hervorming in internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek. Dit proefschrift kaart twee tekortkomingen aan in bestaand onderzoek naar partnerschappen. Ten eerste wordt in dit onderzoek een zeer groot aantal partnerschappen onderzocht (een zogenaamde 'large-n' onderzoek), waardoor het mogelijk wordt een algemeen beeld te schetsen van het ontstaan en de effectiviteit van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling. Ten tweede benadrukt dit proefschrift het belang van specifieke beleidsomgevingen ('specific implementation contexts'). Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling zijn namelijk niet alleen onderdeel van internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek, maar ook van nationale en lokale beleidsomgevingen. De hoofdvraag van dit onderzoek hangt hiermee samen:

Wat verklaart de opkomst van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling als beleidsinstrument in internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek; hoe hebben partnerschappen zich aan specifieke beleidsomgevingen aangepast; en wat is de invloed geweest van partnerschappen op politiek en bestuur in verschillende beleidsomgevingen?

Dit proefschrift beantwoordt deze vraag door middel van een zogenaamde iteratieve onderzoeksstrategie waarbij database-analyses gecombineerd worden met kwalitatieve analyses. Database-analyses geven een algemeen beeld van ontstaanspatronen en de effecten van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling, terwijl analyses van kleinere datasets en een individuele casus een beeld geven van aanpassingsprocessen van partnerschappen aan specifieke beleidsomgevingen. Het tweede deel van het proefschrift behandelt vooral de Chinese beleidsomgeving voor Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling. De meeste onderzoeken naar partnerschappen in China speculeren vooral over de mogelijke rol van partnerschappen in bestuur en beleid. Dit onderzoek gaat een stap verder door eigenlijke aanpassingspatronen van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling te analyseren. Het proefschrift bestaat uit twee delen. Het eerste deel heeft betrekking op partnerschappen in internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek, het tweede bespreekt partnerschappen in specifieke beleidsomgevingen. De voornaamste bevindingen van het onderzoek hebben betrekking op drie deelvragen:

- Wat verklaart de opkomst van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling in internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek?
- Hoe passen partnerschappen zich aan aan specifieke beleidsomgevingen (in het bijzonder in China)?

- Wat is de invloed van partnerschappen op mondiale duurzaamheidspolitiek en op politiek en bestuur in specifieke beleidsomgevingen?

Belangrijkste onderzoeksbevindingen

De opkomst van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling

Het ontstaan van partnerschappen als instrument in internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek wordt vaak verklaard vanuit verschillende institutionele theorieën. Een systematische analyse van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling (hoofdstuk 2) toont echter aan dat bestaande institutionele theorieën vaak weinig overeenkomen met geobserveerde ontstaanspatronen. Partnerschappen ontstaan bijvoorbeeld niet noodzakelijkerwijs waar bestaande instituties tekort schieten. Hoewel institutionele voorwaarden medebepalend zijn, is het ontstaan van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling vooral een politiek proces. Het Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling proces zal daarom ook als politiek proces geanalyseerd moeten worden (hoofdstuk 3). Aanvankelijk waren partnerschappen bedoeld om deelnamemogelijkheden voor niet-statelijke partijen te vergroten en om ontwikkelingslanden te ondersteunen in de uitvoering van duurzame ontwikkelingsbeleid. In de voorbereiding voor de WSSD bleken delegaties echter zeer uiteenlopende ideeën te hebben over de betekenis van partnerschappen en over de rol van partnerschappen in het VN-systeem. Een akkoord kon slechts worden gevonden in een vaag omschreven Partnerschappen voor

Duurzame Ontwikkeling proces. Het zwakke institutionele kader voor Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling had echter ook tot gevolg dat partnerschappen relatief gemakkelijk aan te passen waren aan de meest uiteenlopende beleidsomgevingen op nationaal en lokaal niveau.

De wijde verbreiding van partnerschappen roept de vraag op hoe een zwakke institutionele inkadering van partnerschappen samenhangt met het ontstaan van partnerschappen in specifieke beleidsomgevingen. Een analyse van internationale en transnationale effecten (hoofdstuk 5) toont aan dat het Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling proces nauwelijks van invloed was op de ontwikkeling van partnerschappen in China. Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling die in China actief zijn, richten zich namelijk meestal niet exclusief op China en streven ook geen nationale of lokale beleidsnetwerken na. Het aantal deelnemende Chinese partners in Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling is dan ook laag. Bovendien verhouden deze partnerschappen zich qua doelstellingen meer met internationale beleidsprioriteiten dan prioriteiten in China. De beperkte invloed van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling werpt vragen op ten aanzien van dit proces, toch kunnen transnationale interacties in de internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek wel degelijk leiden tot betere voorwaarden voor het ontstaan van partnerschappen in China (zie onder).

Aanpassing aan specifieke beleidsomgevingen

De verbreiding van partnerschappen in internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek is niet alleen afhankelijk van internationale

besluitvormingsprocessen, maar ook van aanpassingsprocessen aan specifieke beleidsomgevingen. Het feit dat partnerschappen zwak zijn ingekaderd maakt de vraag hoe partnerschappen zich aanpassen nog prangender. De aanpassing van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling aan de Chinese beleidsomgeving blijkt uit het ontstaan van een veel voorkomend partnerschapsmodel (hoofdstuk 6). De meeste partnerschappen in China worden namelijk gekenmerkt door deelname van een groot aantal buitenlandse partijen, aansturing vanuit het buitenland en een oriëntatie op internationale problemen. Enerzijds kan dit model beschouwd worden als een redelijk succesvolle aanpassing, want partnerschappen in China zijn gemiddeld genomen effectiever qua taakrelevante productie. Anderzijds valt uit dit specifieke partnerschapsmodel ook te herleiden dat partnerschappen niet geïntegreerd zijn in Chinees duurzaamheidsbeleid. Het zijn vooral partnerschappen in China in plaats van Chinese partnerschappen.

Door partnerschappen in India en China te vergelijken ontstaat een beter beeld van de invloed van verschillende beleidsomgevingen op aanpassingsprocessen van partnerschappen (hoofdstuk 7). Vergelijkend onderzoek toont onder andere ongelijksoortige relaties aan tussen partnerschappen en overheden; in India voeren partnerschappen soms oppositie tegen publieke overheden, terwijl in China partnerschappen een depolitiserende nadruk leggen op het oplossen van problemen.

Aanpassing vindt ook plaats binnen individuele partnerschappen. De 'Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund' (CEPF) (hoofdstuk 8), een internationaal biodiversiteitsproject, is één van de weinige

Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling die zich richt op het bouwen van partnerschappen en netwerken binnen China. Dit partnerschap heeft zich in grote mate – in organisatorische, strategische en operationele zin – aangepast aan de Chinese beleidsomgeving. CEPF strategieën in China blijken zelfs in tegenspraak te zijn met de internationale doelstellingen van de CEPF. Bijvoorbeeld, internationaal stelt CEPF zich ten doel om brede coalities van ngo's op te bouwen, in China heeft CEPF zich echter vooral gericht op beleidsmakers en wetenschappers.

Invloed: effectief internationaal duurzaamheidsbeleid

Met betrekking tot de invloed van partnerschappen behandelt dit proefschrift voornamelijk drie vragen. Ten eerste, hebben partnerschappen effectievere internationale duurzaamheidsbeleid tot gevolg? Ten tweede, leiden partnerschappen tot de toepassing van mondiale bestuursvormen in specifieke beleidsomgevingen? Ten derde, hoe hangt transnationalisering in de internationale politiek samen met de ontwikkeling van transnationale actoren en partnerschappen in specifieke beleidsomgevingen?

Het idee dat partnerschappen bijdragen aan de effectiviteit van internationale duurzaamheidsbeleid, vooral met betrekking tot beleidsuitvoering, heeft veel steun onder beleidsmakers en beleidswetenschappers. Een database-analyse van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling weerlegt echter veel van deze beweringen (hoofdstuk 4). Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling blijken over het algemeen weinig effectief wat betreft het ontwikkelen van nieuwe normen, het uitvoeren van

internationale afspraken en het betrekken van gemarginaliseerde sociale groepen. Hoewel partnerschappen retorisch in verband worden gebracht met effectiviteit, blijken zij in de praktijk niet te voldoen aan, vaak hooggespannen, verwachtingen.

Invloed: verbreiding van mondiale bestuursvormen

Volgens critici van neoliberale mondialisering zijn partnerschappen instrumenteel in het verbreiden van neoliberaal bestuur in ontwikkelingslanden. Aan de hand van een casusonderzoek wordt in dit proefschrift geanalyseerd in hoeverre aanpassingspatronen overeenkomen met kenmerken van neoliberaal bestuur (hoofdstuk 8). CEPF is een van de weinige Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling die bestuurlijke hervorming in China nastreeft. Als flexibel financieringsmechanisme heeft CEPF duidelijke kenmerken van een neoliberaal instrument omdat het internationale fondsen overhevelt naar private partijen zonder tussenkomst van publieke overheden. Ook in programmatische zin is CEPF neoliberaal te noemen. CEPF bepleit biogeografisch gedefinieerde jurisdicties (zogenaamde 'biodiversity hotspots') in plaats van politiek-geografisch gedefinieerde jurisdicties (zoals provincies en gemeenten) in biodiversiteitsbeleid. Daarmee wil CEPF de rol van publieke overheden inperken. In China schipperde CEPF echter tussen twee enigszins tegenstrijdige sturingsmethoden. De ene methode voorzag in een beperkte overheid en een grote rol voor het maatschappelijk middenveld ('civil society'), vooral voor ngo's. De andere methode voorzag daarentegen in een intensieve samenwerking met publieke overheden en een zeer breed

gedefinieerd maatschappelijk middenveld, dat behalve uit ngo's ook bestaat uit media, bedrijven, onderzoeksinstituten, en zelfs individuele burgers en overheidsdiensten. Een analyse van projectinvesteringen wijst uit dat CEPF vooral de tweede sturingsmethode toepaste in China. De neoliberale kenmerken van de oorspronkelijke CEPF methode zijn in het aanpassingsproces aan de Chinese beleidsomgeving dus afgezwakt.

Invloed: transnationale betrekkingen

Van duurzame ontwikkelingspartnerschappen wordt beweerd dat zij een grotere deelname van niet-statelijke – of transnationale – actoren faciliteren. Hoewel dit waarschijnlijk het geval is wat betreft internationale duurzaamheidspolitiek, hoeft dit niet het geval te zijn binnen specifieke beleidsomgevingen. Het onderzoek naar CEPF (hoofdstuk 8) toont bijvoorbeeld aan hoe vooral grote internationale ngo's en wetenschaps- en onderzoeksinstituten profiteerden van CEPF investeringen, terwijl Chinese ngo's minder investeringen ontvingen en ook minder coördinerende posities binnen gefinancierde projecten kregen toebedeeld. Hoewel CEPF armoedebestrijding en opbouw van civil society als hoofddoelen noemt, was de deelname van de lokale bevolking en lokale ngo's aan CEPF projecten beperkt. Deelname van transnationale partijen in de internationale politiek leidt dus niet ontegenzeggelijk tot de versterking van deze partijen op nationaal en lokaal niveau. Integendeel, soms raken – reeds marginale – partijen relatief verzwakt binnen partnerschapsnetwerken.

Het onderzoek naar de invloed van VN duurzaamheidsprocessen en transnationale interacties (hoofdstuk 5) wijst uit dat transnationale interacties de relatie tussen bijvoorbeeld internationale en Chinese ngo's beïnvloeden. Veelvuldige presentaties van samenwerkingen tussen bedrijven en ngo's binnen verschillende VN duurzaamheidsprocessen inspireren bovendien Chinese ngo's en bedrijven om ook gezamenlijke initiatieven te ondernemen. Hoewel de directe invloed van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling op de vorming van partnerschappen in China beperkt was, beïnvloeden transnationale interacties de beleidsomgeving voor partnerschappen.

Suggesties voor vervolgonderzoek

Dit proefschrift toont aan dat een diepgaand begrip van Partnerschappen voor Duurzame Ontwikkeling niet alleen afhankelijk is van analyses van internationale politieke processen, maar ook van analyses van aanpassingsprocessen in specifieke beleidsomgevingen. Dit onderzoek vormt daarmee mogelijk een basis voor vervolgonderzoek dat zich kan richten op andere thematische en geografische deelgebieden, zodat geleidelijk een completer beeld ontstaat van de rol en de invloed partnerschappen in mondiale duurzaamheidspolitiek.

About the author



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