



Non-Governmental Public Action Programme

Preliminary Research Findings

Non Governmental Public Action Networks and Global Policy Processes

Project aims, objectives, methods

The project on *Networks and Global Policy Processes* is a 21 month program of research ending January 2008. It aims to address the transnational policy activities of research networks, university institutes and think tanks. Poorly understood is the manner in which global policy processes have emerged. International commissions have been created to ponder the social and economic implications of global issues and recommend action. Joint policy responses have led to new forms of delegated authority in 'global public policy networks' composed of NGOs, government agencies, business groups and international organisations.

Governance emerges from strategic interactions and partnerships of national and international bureaucracies with non-state actors in the market place and civil society. In these interfaces, the creators and distributors of policy knowledge (eg. scientific theories, concepts and models, data sets and statistics, policy analysis) are central players in policy. In the weak institutional context of global and regional governance, they are arguably more influential in shaping the parameters of policy making than within the confines of the nation-state.

The objective of the project is to broaden our understanding of how non-governmental public action is implicated in global governance. This is undertaken through critical analysis asking questions about the manner in which knowledge institutions deliver conceptual understanding of policy problems; how networks set policy agendas; and the effectiveness and legitimacy (or not) with which they implement and monitor (non) governmental public action.

The method is participant observation of four case studies of NGPA looking at networks and interactions with official and other non-governmental actors:

1. *The Global Development Network – GDN*. Created by the World Bank, the GDN is an association of development researchers and practitioners devoted to ameliorating poverty. Established as a non-governmental organisation it has now evolved into an international organisation.

2. *The Overseas Development Institute – ODI*. This case addresses the influence of think tanks as well as the manner in which think tanks have become transnational bodies through networks, public-private partnerships and development assistance.

3. *The Open Society Institute – OSI*. Funded by a billionaire philanthropist, OSI initially

focused on social and economic issues of transition societies in Central and Eastern Europe but has taken a 'global turn' in policy dialogues.

4. The ASEAN- Institutes of Strategic and International Studies & the Evian Group. In trade and security, a few elite non-governmental actors have developed close relationships with governments to act as interlocutors in international negotiations to become 'informal diplomats' and 'insiders' to policy making.

The relation of the research project to the NGPA program is its direct focus on 'global research-user chains', analysing knowledge utilisation practices of international organisations and global policy networks. This project will build theory by criticising the dominant neo-pluralist framework of most North American writing on networks, and the neo-corporatist nature of European literature positing that the global arena is open and porous to participation of civil society actors. Adopting other theoretical perspectives – epistemic communities, transnational discourse coalitions and neo-Gramscian ideas – such assumptions will be interrogated to reveal the dual dynamic of openness and closure in networks as both 'gateways' and 'gatekeepers'.

Countries covered:

Given their global activities and international reach, the case study organisations are involved in all regions of the world. However, field work has involved a focus on Hungary, Malaysia, Singapore, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

Further Information

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Key research findings

General:

- Transnational Public Sphere. Theorisation of a 'transnational public sphere' is weak. Moreover, current thinking is characterised with teleological presumptions within the literature of cosmopolitan destinies. Without disavowing the value of democratisation of the global order, nevertheless, the call for global accountabilities puts the (normative) cart before the (conceptual) horse. The realm where such legitimacy questions and accountability issues are to be raised remains poorly conceptualized. In contesting the presumed progressive potential of global civil society in forging this

sphere, the NGPA study makes no presumptions about the communicative, progressive or deliberative character of institutional or network interactions beyond the nation-state. The dynamics for exclusion, seclusion and division are just as likely. The global domain encompasses a wider array of political relationships inspired by liberal democracy through to coercive arrangements of strong authoritarianism, as well as to patterns of disorder, randomness and an absence of rational imposition of planning. The global policy agora may become an accessible participative domain for plural expressions of policy input. But it might not. Hence the focus on elite transnational actors and their policy networks;

- Global Public Policy. Public policy has been a prisoner of the word 'state' even while the state is fast being re-configured by globalization. Through 'global public-private partnerships' and 'transnational executive networks' new forms of authority are emerging through global and regional policy processes that *co-exist* alongside nation-state policy processes. The NGPA study identifies new public spaces where global policies are fashioned and implemented. These global or regional spaces – such as transnational commissions and taskforces, global policy forums like Davos or global funds/partnerships like the Global fund for HIV-AIDS, Malaria and TB – reveal a higher degree of pluralization of actors, fragmentation of decision-making and multiple authority structures than is the case at national levels. Authority is more diffuse, decision making is partially privatised and sovereignty is muddled. Trapped by methodological nationalism and an intellectual agoraphobia of globalization, public policy scholars have yet to examine fully global policy processes and new managerial modes of transnational public administration
- Policy networks are proliferating at the transnational level. However, network density does not equate with policy influence. Such impact largely depends on the type of network structure and composition. The study identifies and categorises four main 'species' of policy network:
 1. *Global Public Policy Networks* are tri-sectoral and *share interests*. That is, they are alliances of government agencies and international organizations with business (usually corporations) and civil society. Actors invest in these GPPN networks to pursue material interest but have in common a shared problem. They tend to cohere around international organizations and governments that have publicly entered into a policy partnership for the delivery of public policy. Their private but public character defies categorisation of these policy arrangements as either civil society or third sector organisations;
 2. *Transnational Advocacy Networks* are plural in composition encompassing a range of non-governmental organizations and activists with *shared beliefs*. These networks seek to shape the climate of public debate and influence global policy agendas and are much less integrated into policy-making than GPPNs. They are bound together by shared values, dense exchanges of information and services, and a shared discourse. They are called advocacy networks as 'advocates plead the causes of others or defend a cause or proposition' and are located in civil society.
 3. *Transnational Executive Networks* are semi-official bureaucratic structures that *pool authority* via inter-governmental networking. Accordingly participants in these networks are office holders acting with state authority – ie. regulators, judges, parliamentarians, national and local bureaucrats – who are reconfiguring state sovereignty through networks.
 4. Characterized by *shared scientific understandings*, a *Knowledge Network* is

“a system of coordinated research, study (and often graduate-level teaching), results dissemination and publication, intellectual exchange, and financing across national boundaries”. The primary motivation of such networks is to create and advance knowledge as well as to share, spread and often use that knowledge to inform policy and apply to practice. The expertise, scientific knowledge, data and method, analysis and evaluations that help constitute knowledge networks provides the experts within them with some authority to inform policy.

- Think Tanks. The phrase ‘think tank’ has become ubiquitous – overworked and underspecified – in the political lexicon. It is entrenched in scholarly discussions of public policy as well as in the ‘policy wonk’ of journalists, lobbyists and spin-doctors. This does not mean that there is an agreed definition of think tank or consensual understanding of their roles and functions. Nevertheless, the majority of organizations with this label undertake policy research of some kind. The idea of think tanks as a research communication ‘bridge’ presupposes that there are discernible boundaries between (social) science and policy. The frontiers are not only organizational and legal; they also exist in how the ‘public interest’ is conceived by these bodies and their financiers. Moreover, the social interactions and exchanges involved in ‘bridging’, themselves muddy the conception of ‘boundary’ allowing for analysis to go beyond the dualism imposed in seeing science on one side of the bridge, and the state on the other, to address the complex relations between experts and public policy.

Case Studies:

- Policy transfer is a transnational policy process whereby knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements or institutions in one place is used in the development of policy elsewhere. The literature has focused on official transfers of policy tools, standards, institutions and legislation to the neglect of non-state actors involved in these processes. To some degree, all case study networks in this NGPA study are involved in policy transfer processes.
- The Open Society Institute (OSI) was set up as a global civil society actor in the form of a philanthropic foundation funded by a billionaire philanthropist. OSI initially focused on social and economic issues of transition societies in Central and Eastern Europe transferring ‘western’ policy norms and practices regarding market economies, educational systems, freedom of information law, etc. OSI has since taken a ‘global turn’ in policy dialogues. Its status as an ‘independent’ ‘third sector’ or ‘civil society’ body becomes questionable with the organisation’s growing policy focus and increasing partnership with international organisations and governmental actors.
- Bridging Research and Policy: Many organizational interests have advocated the need to ‘bridge research and policy’. Funders such as philanthropic foundations, national social science funding regimes (ESRC), development agencies (DfID) and international organisations like the World Bank and UNESCO have sought to improve the relationship. Similarly, consumers of research – such as NGOs, government departments and international agencies – have bemoaned the lack of research relevance. Consequently, some producers of research and analysis – universities, think tanks, scientific associations and scholarly academies – have initiated programs or activities to improve research communication and knowledge utilisation. The NGPA study goes beyond the dichotomisation of the separate worlds of (social) science research and that of politics and policy making to argue that knowledge production and utilisation is intimately bound with governance.
- The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is a London based think tank and forms the case study on ‘bridging research and policy’. The Institute has developed

extensive networks, both formal and informal, outside the UK. Like most think tanks, ODI operates on the basis of persuasion and consensus building via debate, research and analysis. Although sometimes a powerful force, (social) science is not inherently persuasive in policy debates. In this regard, ODI is distinctive among think tanks in having a dedicated programme on 'Research and Policy In Development' (RAPID). The programme makes explicit and implicit assumptions about how research and analysis can be relevant, responsible and indeed, ethical as a means "to help save lives, reduce poverty and improve the quality of life". The study addresses how and to what effect ODI behaves as a 'knowledge broker' or 'policy entrepreneur' between bureaucracies, policy networks and international organisations. Think tanks like ODI do not have the luxury of being on the "academic sidelines". They must engage in dissemination and policy recommendation. For these organisations, it is a question of how to maintain a critical position *within* their engagements with the policy world. However, attempts to inform or influence policy generally structure institutes into a problem solving rather than critical dynamic.

- Informal Diplomacy (*in progress*). Informal diplomacy entails activities or discussions involving academics and intellectuals, journalists, business elites and others as well as government officials and political leaders 'acting in their private capacity'. The notion that bureaucrats and politicians are acting in their private capacity is to be treated as a 'polite fiction'. Official and non-governmental participation in seminars, conferences and organizations is 'mixed' or 'blended' suggesting that the demarcation between official and unofficial involvement is unclear. Think tanks have often provided the 'neutral territory' for the conduct of informal diplomacy
- ASEAN-Institutes of Strategic and International Studies and the Evian Group (*in progress*) ASEAN-ISIS is registered with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat as an NGO. Its Charter mandates that only research institutions based in ASEAN member countries may join ASEAN-ISIS. This network has been influential in informing security debates and the subsequent formation of a new regional inter-governmental organisation.
- NGPA and International Organisation (*in progress*). This component of the research investigates the extent to which international organisations constitute a new public sector, especially through the advocacy of the framework 'global public goods'.
- The Global Development Network (GDN) (*in progress*). The GDN is a good example of the movement of a network organisation between public and private domains, and of the blurring of its ostensibly civil society activity from its official public sector origins. Conceived and gestated inside the World Bank in the late 1990s, the Network was 'spun off' as a NGO in large part to improve its credibility and legitimacy through independence and distance from its parent institution. The current stage of its evolution is its reinvention as an international organisation. While the GDN has gone through its non-governmental stage, to represent this body as outside the public domain is mistaken. It is inextricably linked with the World Bank through funding, professional contacts and appointments of key staff, and in the quest for inter-governmental treaty status it consolidates itself as a public sector organisation. As the final case study, moving from ODI as the classic example of independent think tank, OSI as operating foundation and policy transfer network, ASEAN-ISIS as regional network the study comes to GDN as a global public sector organisation. Yet, the GDN case is more than simply its movement from inside the international public sector, to the outside, and its transmogrification into public status. GDN is indicative of the potential institutionalisation of the network form. This process is the obverse of privatisation. The GDN is an example of *publicisation* (but definitely not 'nationalisation').

Policy and practice implications

- NGO Capacity Building: Weyrauch's study of policy networks provides practical guidelines of how to set up and manage a transnational network as well as guidelines and lessons from practice of network efforts to influence policy making. Her report - *Weaving Global Networks - Handbook for policy influence* – has been very popular in the NGO community to the extent that it ran out of print within 6 months of publication.
- Teaching and Training: Franklyn Lisk, formerly an international civil servant with the ILO, has used the network categorisation outlined below in training sessions for sub-Saharan African civil servants and NGO executives in a training course on HIV-AIDS in conjunction with IDEP – the UN sponsored African Institute for Economic Development and Planning. Similarly, Richard Higgott used the same network categorisation at the GARNET Phd School on 'Global Governance and EU' in Bruges, November 2007.
- Network Engagement and Accountabilities: The 'unbundling' of sovereignty and extension of state activities –formally through official delegates and informally through NGOs – presents a new set of normative questions and practical challenges about democracy and representation in networked non-governmental domains.

Key publications and outputs

Publications by Vanesa Weyrauch

- *Weaving Global Networks - Handbook for policy influence*
<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/staff/stone/research/> ESRC-NGPA User Fellow, October 2006 – February 2007.

Publications by Diane Stone

- 'Global Public Policy, Transnational Policy Communities and their Networks,' *Journal of Policy Sciences*, forthcoming 2008.
- "Market Principles, Philanthropic Ideals and Public Service Values: The Public Policy Program at the Central European University", *PS: Political Science and Politics*, July 2007: 545—551.
- 'Garbage Cans, Recycling Bins or Think Tanks? Three Myths About Policy Institutes', *Public Administration*, 85(2): 2007.
- 'Think Tanks and Policy Analysis', in Frank Fischer, Gerald J. Miller. & Mara S. Sidney (eds.) *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Methods, and Politics*, New York, Marcel Dekker Inc. 2006: 149-157.
- with Christopher Wright 'The Currency of Change: World Bank Lending and Learning in

the Wolfensohn Era', in Diane Stone and Christopher Wright (eds) *The World Bank and Governance: A Decade of Reform and Reaction*, London, Routledge, 2006: 1-25.

- "Think Tanks and Policy Advice in Countries in Transition", in Toru Hashimoto, Stefan Hell and Sang-Woo Nam (eds) *Public Policy Research and Training in Vietnam*, Asian Development Bank Institute, Tokyo, (ADB, 2006: 38-109).
- Adrian Ionescu, Valeriu Prohntchi, Gulnar Mukhambetova and Diane Stone "Transferring Expertise and Methodologies: A Case Study of the Development of 'Quarterly Economic Indicators' in Moldova and Kazakhstan", in Robert Klitgaard (editor) *Linking Think Tanks*, Santa Monica, California, RAND 2008 (book manuscript completed and under review).
- 'Transnational Think Tanks', in Roland Robertson and Jan Aart Scholte (eds) *Encyclopedia of Globalization*, (New York: Routledge, 2006).
- *The World Bank and Governance: A Decade of Reform and Reaction*, edited volume with Christopher Wright, (Routledge, 2006: i-xx; 1-267).

Dissemination:

- Policy Transfer or Transnational Philanthropy? The Open Society Institute as a Norm Entrepreneur, Politics and International Studies seminar, University of Warwick, 21st November 2007.
- *Global Processes and Non Governmental Public Action*, One week doctoral and post doctoral workshop, Center for Policy Studies, Central European University, July 16-20, 2007 – 27 participants with eighteen paper presentations.
- 'Knowledge and Policy Networks in Global Governance', Gender Knowledge and Knowledge Networks in IPE – GIPE, Budapest, 20th July 2007.
- Convenor, 'Inclusive Research' panel, Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics – ABCDE, Bled, Slovenia, 10th May 2007
- 'Responsible Scholarship and Knowledge Utilisation: Bridging Research and Policy at the Overseas Development Institute', Paper prepared for the International Studies Association annual convention, Chicago 28th February, 2007
- 'Social Science, Research and Students in Development', Warwick International Development Society, 3rd December 2006.
- 'Global Public Policy and Transnational Policy Communities,' paper for the GARNET Workshop, Institute of Social Studies, den Haag, November 2006. (Workshop paper in preparation for a volume edited by Wil Hout and Dick Robison).
- Transnational Philanthropy, Policy Transfer and the Open Society Institute'. School of Public Policy Research Seminar Series, University College London, 5th October 2006.
- Conference organiser, the World Bank in Singapore, 18th September 2006, Singapore (32 participants).

- 'The Open Society Institute: Transnational Philanthropy, Policy Advocacy and Global Civil Society', EGOS Annual conference, The Organizing Society, 6-9 July 2006, Bergen Norway. (Paper revised and under submission to journal). Co-convenor of five panels of papers at the EGOS conference.
- 'The Open Society Institute: Transnational Philanthropy, Policy Advocacy and Global Civil Society', Non Governmental Public Action workshop, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, London 2 May 2006.
- 'The Open Society Institute: Transnational Philanthropy, Policy Advocacy and Global Civil Society', European Consortium for Political Research, Cyprus, 26-29 April, 2006.
- 'Global Public Policy', Governance and Regulation Network Workshop, 6 April, 2006, The Hague.
- 'Global Public Policy, Public Service and Leadership', Barcelona Institute of International Relations Masters Graduation Speech, 3rd March 2006.
- Three seminar presentations on transnational networks; global civil society and global public goods at the doctoral summer school on Globalisation and International Relations Theory, Central European University, July 2006.