

Multistakeholderism Filling the Global Governance Gap?

Research Overview for the
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Abstract

Multistakeholderism has grown in recent decades as a major alternative (and sometimes challenge) to intergovernmental multilateralism in the handling of global risks. This report examines existing and missing wanted knowledge about multistakeholder global governance. Successive sections of the report assess available and lacking research in terms of (i) general overviews of the subject; (ii) case studies of specific global multistakeholder initiatives; and (iii) theoretical analyses of this form of global regulation. The review finds that, while substantial academic and policy literature has accumulated on multistakeholder global governance over the past two decades, notable knowledge gaps exist. Lacunae that want attention include full broad syntheses, multi-case and cross-issue comparative studies, large-*n* and survey data, and multicultural perspectives. Regarding theory, more work is wanted to explain the evolution and consequences of multistakeholder global governance, to evaluate its distributive consequences, and to explore issues of accountability, human rights, and legitimacy.

Introduction: What Is Multistakeholder Global Governance?

This research overview examines existing and missing wanted knowledge on the subject of multistakeholder global governance. 'Multistakeholderism' has emerged in recent decades as a major alternative (and sometimes challenge) to traditional 'multilateralism' in the handling of global risks. In contrast to multilateralism, with its focus on global cooperation among national governments, multistakeholderism meets global challenges by assembling representatives of various state and nonstate constituencies who have a stake in (i.e. affect and/or are affected by) the problem at hand. Global multistakeholder initiatives most often bring together business, civil society, and government; however, these governance processes can also incorporate academia, foundations, intergovernmental organizations, and technical circles. Some multistakeholder mechanisms exclude government and involve only nonstate sectors.

Multistakeholder arrangements go by a host of other names: one source counts 21 common descriptors in the English language alone.¹ Common alternative labels include 'partnerships', 'public-private partnerships', and 'global public policy networks'.² However, the term 'multistakeholder' better conveys the principle of gathering actors from several sectors of society. 'Multistakeholder' also avoids the implicitly appreciative and promotional tenor of 'partnership', 'collaborative governance', and 'global solution networks'.³ 'Multistakeholder' provides more neutrally descriptive language that is open to a full spectrum of evaluations, ranging from evangelical promotion to virulent critique.

This report focuses on *global* multistakeholder mechanisms. Many transsectoral governance processes operate within local, national, and regional arenas. True, these territorially limited apparatuses often also address global issues (e.g. concerning environment, health, etc.). However, the present survey mainly considers multistakeholder arrangements that operate across, and integrate participants from, several continents. In these cases, a global problem

¹ Brouwer and Woodhill 2015: 15.

² Osbourne 2000; Rosenau Villancourt 2002; Börzel and Risse 2005; Mikheyev 2005: 299-300; Witte et al. 2005; Bull and McNeill 2007; Martens 2007; Beisheim and Liese 2014.

³ Rasche 2010; Tapscott 2014; Adams and Mills 2018.

elicits a globally organized response, although of course the global framework can incorporate variations at local, national and regional levels.⁴

In contrast to territorially based initiatives, global-scale multistakeholder governance raises distinctive issues inter alia about resourcing, organizational coordination, cultural pluralism, state sovereignty, accountability, and legitimacy. Global multistakeholderism proposes to regulate major policy challenges through transplanetary, transcultural, transsectoral frameworks, with processes that moreover often sideline the state. How can this alternative approach to global governance – which was largely unthinkable several decades ago – be effective and legitimate?

Multistakeholder global governance comes in what one might call ‘ancillary’ and ‘executive’ formats. The ‘ancillary’ version occurs when a multilateral (i.e. intergovernmental) organization brings nonstate actors into its regulatory processes.⁵ For example, the United Nations (UN) often consults with business and civil society representatives as part of its deliberations on global issues. The World Health Organization (WHO) collaborates with the private sector to design and finance particular disease control programmes. The World Bank often subcontracts aspects of policy implementation to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). However, in such cases nonstate actors are appendages to a state-centred multilateral regulatory apparatus.

The ‘executive’ variant of global multistakeholderism is different, in that the actual decision-making mechanism of global governance takes a multistakeholder form, without being part of or answering to an intergovernmental body. For instance, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) makes and administers rules for sustainable logging worldwide, and the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) oversees critical parts of global digital communications infrastructure. In such ‘executive’ arrangements, the multistakeholder organization itself formulates and carries out global regulation, autonomously from

⁴ Bartley 2010; Rasche 2012; Arevalo 2014; Rantala and Di Gregorio 2014; Yakovleva and Vazquez-Brust 2014; Aravind and Arevalo 2015; Brockmyer 2016; Tighe 2016; Seufert 2017; Niedziałkowski and Shkaruba 2018; UNFSS 2018.

⁵ Scholte 2011; Tallberg et al. 2013; Andonova 2017.

intergovernmental agencies. ‘Executive’ multistakeholderism thereby fundamentally shifts the institutional locus of global governance, in the process often challenging (either implicitly or explicitly) the multilateralist approach.

To be sure, the distinction between ‘ancillary’ and ‘executive’ multistakeholderism is not a neat binary, and certain cases fall somewhere in between. For example, initiatives such as the the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) and the United Nations Global Compact formally fall under the auspices of UN organs, but in practice operate quite autonomously from them. Likewise, the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) reports to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), but mainly works in a stakeholder-led manner.

Global multistakeholder initiatives integrate different mindsets and experiences, bringing together the activist, the bureaucrat, the engineer, the entrepreneur, the funder, the journalist, the researcher, etc. The motivating intuition is that blending diverse pools of information and insight can yield more effective global problem-solving.⁶ In addition, proponents often argue that global multistakeholder regimes can through the involvement of business and foundations attract more resources than traditional multilateral institutions. Moreover, representing people through their functional affiliations rather than through their countries purportedly offers an alternative (and some have argued more solid) basis for global democracy and justice,⁷ although critics point to power hierarchies that defy the supposed ‘horizontality’ of multistakeholder frameworks.⁸

Multistakeholder arrangements pervade global governance today. Although cross-sectoral collaboration on global issues dates back to the nineteenth century, the main growth of both ancillary and executive multistakeholderism has occurred since the late 1990s.⁹ Hence almost all of the literature covered in this report has appeared after the year 2000. Today scores of multistakeholder mechanisms operate in global policy, around issues including corporate

⁶ Cf. Abbott and Snidal 2009; Waddell 2011; Tapscott 2014.

⁷ Cf. Doria 2014; Dodds 2019.

⁸ Cf. Cheynes and Riisgaard 2014; Faul 2016.

⁹ Schleifer 2015: 5; Westerwinter 2019: 2.

social responsibility, disaster relief, ecological changes, financial instability, food provision, health challenges, the Internet, security problems, trade flows, water management, and more. Exploratory work has also started on multistakeholder designs for global governance of emergent technologies such as artificial intelligence¹⁰ and climate engineering.¹¹

With this growing importance of multistakeholder global governance comes a set of pressing research questions. What defines a ‘multistakeholder’ approach to global policy? How can we explain the emergence and spread of this institutional form of global regulation? After a quarter-century of intensified experimentation across many issue areas, what are the results of global multistakeholder arrangements in terms of effective, democratic and fair problem-solving? In short, how far can multistakeholderism offer an answer to today’s global governance gap?

This report reviews what research to date offers in response to these questions. Successive sections below examine existing literature regarding general overviews, specific studies, and theoretical understandings of multistakeholder global governance. Under each of these three headings, we summarize currently available knowledge and identify omissions that future research could usefully address. Our review finds that, while substantial academic and policy literature has accumulated on multistakeholder global governance, notable gaps exist in respect of both empirical and theoretical knowledge.

We should underline from the outset that this review does not exhaustively cover all publications about every aspect of each instance of global multistakeholderism. In particular, to repeat, the focus lies with ‘executive’ rather than ‘ancillary’ multistakeholder arrangements. Moreover, the report mainly cites work that examines more directly and specifically the multistakeholder institutional design of the various regimes in question. Only writings in English are surveyed. Still, even this narrower selection of literature yields a lengthy bibliography of over 300 writings.

¹⁰ Partnership on AI 2020.

¹¹ Conca 2019.

General Overviews

In spite of the major spread of multistakeholder arrangements in contemporary global governance, academic literature that addresses the overall phenomenon is limited. As the next section of this report details, most existing research on multistakeholderism examines a specific initiative (e.g. the Global Fund or the Kimberley Process) or a particular policy field (e.g. corporate social responsibility or environment). Generally absent is well-grounded synthesizing academic analysis of multistakeholder global governance as a whole.

To be sure, important research publications do examine the general trends of transnationalization¹² and privatization¹³ in contemporary global governance. Such work describes, explains and evaluates how regulation of global flows and problems now increasingly involves actors and procedures outside of traditional intergovernmental venues.¹⁴ The proliferation of executive multistakeholder regimes unfolds as part of these larger shifts in ways of governing; hence, literature on transnational and private global governance helps to place multistakeholder institutions in a wider context of regulatory change. That said, these broader writings usually do not subject global multistakeholder arrangements to specific treatment and/or systematic comparison with other new modes of global governance, such as transgovernmental networks¹⁵ and industry-based regimes.¹⁶

For overviews more particularly of multistakeholder global governance, one can turn to an array of journal articles, book chapters, and policy reports.¹⁷ A couple of edited volumes on global multistakeholder arrangements also give some attention to general issues regarding

¹² Djelic and Sahlin-Andersson 2006; Dingwerth 2007; Peters et al. 2009; Hale and Held 2011; Halliday and Shaffer 2015; Roger and Dauvergne 2016; Seabrooke and Folke Henriksen 2017.

¹³ Cutler et al. 1999; Brühl et al. 2001; Hall and Biersteker 2002; Graz and Nölke 2008; Hansen and Salskov-Iversen 2008; Büthe and Mattli 2011.

¹⁴ Reinecke and Deng 2000 ; Avant et al. 2010; Abbott et al. 2016.

¹⁵ Cf. Raustiala 2002; Slaughter 2004; Zaring 2004.

¹⁶ Cf. Ougaard and Leander 2010; Kruck 2011; McKeen-Edwards and Porter 2013.

¹⁷ Susskind et al. 2003; Vallejo and Hauselmann 2005; Hocking 2006; Martens 2007; Waddell and Khagram 2007; De la Chapelle 2008; Wigell 2008; Bezanson and Isenman 2012; Khanna 2012; Tapscott 2014; Brouwer and Woodhill 2015; Raymond and DeNardis 2015; Lundsgaarde 2016; MSI 2017c; Strickling and Hill 2017; HLPE 2018.

the dynamics and impacts of this mode of regulation.¹⁸ Two recent monographs examine overall global multistakeholderism, albeit with a specific emphasis on implications for democracy.¹⁹ Several writings provide brief accounts of the history of multistakeholder global governance.²⁰

Yet what the literature lacks and needs is comprehensive book-length academic treatment of executive multistakeholder global governance that ranges across issue-areas, across the world, and across the decades. There are no obvious standard reference works, no handbooks on global multistakeholderism from the major academic publishing houses, no introductory textbooks, no professionally researched overall histories. We therefore miss scholarship that pulls the many threads together into an umbrella analysis. Such big-picture perspectives would provide important and helpful knowledge for researchers, practitioners, students, and concerned citizens.

Specific Cases

Whereas overarching analyses of multistakeholder global governance are limited, abundant research addresses multistakeholderism in particular institutions and issue areas. These case studies concentrate especially on global challenges where multistakeholder arrangements have spread most: namely, environment, the Internet, corporate accountability, and health. Additional research has looked at multistakeholderism in further policy fields, such as food and agriculture, education, and security. However, what the literature generally lacks is multi-case studies, particularly work that undertakes systematic comparative analysis of multistakeholder global governance across several issue areas.

In terms of individual problem areas, a large body of research has looked at global multistakeholder initiatives in respect of environment and sustainable development. Ecological changes have demanded expanded global governance at a much faster rate than

¹⁸ Kurbalija and Katrandjiev 2006; Beisheim and Liese 2014.

¹⁹ Gleckman 2018; Dodds 2019.

²⁰ Dodds 2002; Marx and Wouters 2016: 435-38; Martens 2007; Hill 2017; McKeon 2017a: 383-88.

traditional multilateralism has been able to deliver, so it is not surprising that much growth of executive multistakeholder apparatuses has come around environmental challenges. Some of the relevant literature has covered multistakeholderism across global environmental governance at large.²¹ Other research has examined multistakeholder responses to a particular global environmental challenge, such as biodiversity loss,²² climate change,²³ coral reef protection,²⁴ deforestation,²⁵ and sustainable energy.²⁶ Still other work has offered detailed examination of a particular multistakeholder governance initiative in the field of global environment. Examples include the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM),²⁷ the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC),²⁸ the ISEAL Alliance (International Social and Environmental Accreditation and Labelling Alliance),²⁹ the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC),³⁰ the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO),³¹ and the World Commission on Dams (WCD).³²

Like global ecological changes, the growth of the Internet has unfolded much faster than old-style intergovernmentalism has been able to match. The consequent major expansion of multistakeholder global governance around the Internet has also attracted substantial research attention. A veritable plethora of publications has examined the general use of multistakeholder arrangements in Internet governance.³³ Other studies have looked at

²¹ Hemmati 2002; Poncelet 2003; Bäckstrand 2006a, 2006b; Biermann et al. 2007; Glasbergen et al. 2007; Bäckstrand and Kylsäter 2014; Derkx and Glasbergen 2014; Matus 2014; Pattberg and Widerberg 2014, 2016; Dodds 2015; De Bakker et al. 2019.

²² Milder 2016; Borial and Heras-Saizarbitoria 2017.

²³ Hoffmann 2011; Pinkse and Kolk 2012; Bulkeley et al. 2012, 2014; Conca 2019.

²⁴ Bloomfield and Schleifer 2017.

²⁵ Driscoll 1996; Bartley 2010.

²⁶ Szulecki et al. 2011; Fortin 2013; Ponte 2014; Schleifer 2014; Lundsgaarde 2016.

²⁷ Green 2008; Kuchler 2017.

²⁸ Dingwerth 2007; Marx et al. 2012; Moog et al. 2015; Colchester 2016; Jaung et al. 2016; Karman et al. 2016; Malets 2017; Romero et al. 2017; Niedziałkowski and Shkaruba 2018.

²⁹ Loconto and Fueilleux 2014; Mundle et al. 2017.

³⁰ Cummins 2004; Ponte 2012; Pérez-Ramírez et al. 2016; Arton et al. 2018.

³¹ Cheyns 2011; Schouten et al. 2012; Schouten and Glasbergen 2012; Nesadurai 2013, 2019; Köhne 2014; Silva-Castañeda 2015; Colchester 2016; MacDonald and Balaton-Chrimes 2016; Schleifer 2016; Veiga and Rodrigues 2016; Schleifer and Sun 2018.

³² Brinkerhoff 2002; Hemmati 2002b; Dingwerth 2007.

³³ Antonova 2007, 2011; Dutton and Peltu 2007, 2009; Kleinwächter 2007; Drake and Wilson 2008; Flyverbom and Bislev 2008; Marsden 2008; Mathiason 2008s; Mueller 2010; Flyverbom 2011; Take 2012; Waz and Weiser 2012; DeNardis 2013; DeNardis and Raymond 2013; Huston 2013; Shtern et al. 2013; Blackman 2014; Cerf et al. 2014; Chenou 2014; Doria 2014; Gurstein 2014; Hill 2014b, 2016; Mihr 2014; Radu et al. 2014, 2015; Almeida et

specific multistakeholder initiatives for the Internet, such as the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS),³⁴ the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN),³⁵ the Internet Governance Forum (IGF),³⁶ NETmundial,³⁷ the Regional Internet Registries (RIRs),³⁸ and the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C).³⁹ A few other works consider multistakeholder approaches to particular aspects of Internet regulation, such as cybersecurity⁴⁰ and exchange points.⁴¹

Multistakeholder formats have also attracted substantial research interest in respect of the voluntary regulation of global corporate enterprises. Especially since the late 1990s business, civil society and government have come together to construct and monitor many codes of conduct for global companies on matters such as corruption, environmental standards, human rights, and labour conditions. Some research has considered the general phenomenon of multistakeholder global governance regarding so-called ‘corporate social responsibility’ (CSR).⁴² Other studies have examined multistakeholder arrangements for specific codes of transnational business conduct.⁴³ Prominent objects of investigation in this area include the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI),⁴⁴ the Global Compact,⁴⁵ and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI).⁴⁶ Also noteworthy is a monograph on multistakeholderism around the World Economic Forum (WEF).⁴⁷

al. 2015; Carr 2015; Gasser et al. 2015; Savage and McConnell 2015; Global Commission on Internet Governance 2016; Hofmann 2016; Sahel 2016; Strickling and Hill 2017.

³⁴ Padovani 2005; Chakravarty 2006; Drake and Wilson 2008; Mathiason 2008; Raboy et al. 2010.

³⁵ Antonova 2008; Weinberg 2011; Mahler 2019; Jongen and Scholte 2019, 2020.

³⁶ De La Chapelle 2007; Malcolm 2008; Antonova 2012; Epstein and Nonnecke 2016; Brandie 2016; Nonnecke 2016.

³⁷ Fraundorfer 2017.

³⁸ Ashwin 2014; Sowell 2015.

³⁹ Doty and Mulligan 2013.

⁴⁰ Finnemore and Duncan 2016.

⁴¹ Wagner and Mindus n.d.

⁴² Utting 2001, 2014; O’Rourke 2003, 2006; Fransen and Kolk 2007; Bendell et al. 2010; Fransen 2012; Jerbi 2012; Soundarajan and Brown 2014; Tamo 2016; Grosser 2016; Soundarajan et al. 2019; Tanimoto 2019.

⁴³ O’Rourke 2003, 2006; Baumann-Pauly et al. 2015; Airike et al. 2016; Tighe 2016; Boersma 2018.

⁴⁴ MSI 2015a, 2015b; Daitch and Field 2016; Neumann 2016; Sovacool et al. 2016; Magno and Gatmaytan 2017; Öge 2017; Pousadela 2017; Rustad et al. 2017.

⁴⁵ Kell 2003; Kell and Levin 2003; Buhmann 2011; Gitsham and Page 2014; Voegtlin and Pless 2014; Arevalo 2014; Aravind and Arevalo 2015.

⁴⁶ Dingwerth 2007; Vigneau et al. 2015.

⁴⁷ Pigman 2007. Also WEF 2010; Gleckman 2013.

A fourth issue area in global governance where the multistakeholder principle has found particular traction is health, although the language of ‘public-private partnerships’ (PPPs) is more usual in this policy realm. Most health PPPs operate on local and national levels,⁴⁸ but research has also examined several notable global multistakeholder initiatives on health.⁴⁹ Prominent examples include the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM),⁵⁰ GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance,⁵¹ and the Medicines Transparency Alliance (MeTA).⁵²

As said earlier, multistakeholderism is pervasive in global governance today; so, as one might expect, research on the subject also extends to a host of other issue areas. For example, several publications have examined (global) multistakeholder initiatives around food and agriculture.⁵³ Specific case studies have focused on multistakeholderism in the Committee on World Food Security (CFS),⁵⁴ the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD),⁵⁵ the New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Africa,⁵⁶ and Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN).⁵⁷ In the area of education, several studies have evaluated multistakeholder processes in the Global Partnership for Education (GPE).⁵⁸ With respect to security, research has considered global multistakeholder constructions such as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS, to curb trade in conflict diamonds)⁵⁹ and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers (ICoC).⁶⁰ Incidental other research has examined multistakeholderism in the global governance of biological

⁴⁸ Cf. Alexander et al. 2016.

⁴⁹ Buse 2004; Buse and Harmer 2004; Rushton and Williams 2011; Clinton and Sridhar 2017; Andonova 2018; Taylor and Alper 2018.

⁵⁰ Abdul Aziz 2009; Brown 2010; Long and Duvvury 2011.

⁵¹ Starling 2002; Muraskin 2004.

⁵² Buckland-Merrett et al. 2017; Vian et al. 2017.

⁵³ Häring et al. 2009; Dentoni et al. 2012; Dentoni and Ross 2013; Fuchs et al. 2013; Breeman et al. 2015; McKeon 2017a, 2018; Seufert 2017; HLPE 2018.

⁵⁴ Brem-Wilson 2015, 2018; Gaarde 2017; Alves Zanella et al. 2018.

⁵⁵ Scoones 2009.

⁵⁶ FIAN 2014; McKeon 2014.

⁵⁷ Lie and Granheim 2017.

⁵⁸ Mingramm and Bonilla 2005; Menashy and Dryden-Peterson 2015; Menashy 2016, 2017, 2018; Knutsson and Lindberg 2018, 2019; Golden 2018.

⁵⁹ Grant and Taylor 2004; Haufler 2009, 2015; Grant 2013; Pitsch Santiago 2014; Tamo 2016; Westerwinter 2016.

⁶⁰ MacLeod 2015; Avant 2016; Pouliot and Thérien 2018.

weapons,⁶¹ disaster relief,⁶² energy,⁶³ fair trade,⁶⁴ human rights,⁶⁵ public-sector reform,⁶⁶ and sport.⁶⁷

While there is this abundance of research on specific instances of multistakeholder global governance, the large body of work just reviewed also shows a striking lack of multi-case studies and comparative analysis across policy areas. One notable academic monograph systematically compares the WCD, the FSC, and the GRI.⁶⁸ Certain other studies have examined multistakeholder mechanisms across different fields of standardization and certification.⁶⁹ A couple of policy reports have compared ‘partnerships’ in several issue areas with the aim to identify general strengths and weaknesses in producing results.⁷⁰ Yet, these few exceptions aside, researchers on multistakeholder global governance have usually remained in narrow silos, focusing on a particular issue area or a specific institution. More multi-case and cross-area comparative research would help to identify what is generic and what is distinctive in the many instances of multistakeholder regimes. Comparative work would also help to share lessons between policy fields for more effective, democratic and fair practices of multistakeholder global governance.

Also underdeveloped in empirical research on multistakeholderism is large-*n* data. As seen above, extensive literature has accumulated to detail specific instances of multistakeholder global governance. However, we mostly lack databases that encompass the broader phenomenon of global multistakeholderism. Such big-picture evidence could show, for example, longitudinal trends in the establishment and growth of global multistakeholder institutions. Large-*n* data would also facilitate general comparisons of multistakeholderism in different issue areas, different institutional formats, and different regions of the world. Large-

⁶¹ McLeish and Feakes 2008.

⁶² Chang et al. 2008.

⁶³ Chaban and Knodt 2015.

⁶⁴ Huybrechts 2012; Utting 2015.

⁶⁵ Jerbi 2012; FIAN 2014; Mihr 2014; Baumann-Pauly et al. 2015; Tamo 2016; Seufert 2017.

⁶⁶ Brockmyer 2016.

⁶⁷ Pamment 2016.

⁶⁸ Dingwerth 2007.

⁶⁹ Peters et al. 2009; Marx 2010; Tamm Hallström and Boström 2010; Boström and Tamm Hallström 2013; Auld 2014; UNFSS 2018; Schleifer et al. 2019a.

⁷⁰ World Bank 2011; Bezanson and Isenman 2012; Brouwer et al. 2015.

n evidence would furthermore open possibilities (thus far underexploited) of quantitative methods in research on the forces that drive multistakeholder global governance. A few databases have covered multistakeholderism in a specific issue area such as climate change⁷¹ or industry standards,⁷² but not the overall global multistakeholder phenomenon. A recent initiative to build a broader database on ‘transnational public-private governance initiatives’ is therefore most welcome, but it so far stands on its own (and moreover mainly covers ‘ancillary’ rather than ‘executive’ global multistakeholder arrangements).⁷³

Another methodological area for further development is survey research. Several recent surveys have examined global multistakeholder efforts to combat climate change,⁷⁴ and another currently ongoing project involves a large survey regarding multistakeholderism at ICANN.⁷⁵ For the rest, however, we lack survey evidence regarding global multistakeholder initiatives, which could reveal more about the views and practices of participants in, and onlookers to, these regimes.

Finally, existing research on multistakeholder global governance tends to have a narrow cultural base in Europe and North America. Much scholarship assumes that multistakeholder constructions are a ‘western’ institution that exports to the rest of the world. Moreover, the vast majority of researchers approach the subject from ‘western’ perspectives while based at universities and think tanks in Europe and North America. Relatively little work has examined how global multistakeholderism operates, is experienced in, and can be driven by actors in Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Middle East, Latin America, and Pacific.⁷⁶ Pretty well all publications are available only in English.⁷⁷ To this extent, the current library on multistakeholder global governance accords limited voice and initiative to non-western ‘others’.⁷⁸

⁷¹ Hoffmann 2011; Bulkeley et al. 2012, 2014.

⁷² MSI 2017c.

⁷³ Westerwinter 2019.

⁷⁴ Nasiritousi and Verhaegen 2019.

⁷⁵ Jongen and Scholte 2019, 2020.

⁷⁶ Ngai and Yuen-Tsang 2011; Brouwer et al. 2013; Calandro et al. 2013; Galloway and He 2014; Knight 2014; Rantala and Di Gregorio 2014; Vazquez-Brust et al. 2014; Nonnecke 2016; Pérez-Ramírez et al. 2016; Schleifer 2016; Veiga and Rodrigues 2016; Schleifer and Sun 2018; Schleifer et al. 2019a.

⁷⁷ For an exception see Veiga and Rodrigues 2016.

⁷⁸ Cf. Nathan 2014; Scholte 2015.

Theory

Having covered research on substantive aspects of multistakeholder global governance, this review now turns to theoretical perspectives. Many academic and most policy publications on multistakeholderism do not theorize the phenomenon very explicitly or systematically. To this extent, one could urge that the literature on multistakeholderism raise its overall conceptual game with more attention to elaborating and interrogating its theoretical bases. That said, available research also includes rich theoretical work.

Below we examine existing studies of multistakeholder global governance with regard to questions of definition, explanation, and normative evaluation. In particular, this review looks to identify potentially promising theoretical avenues that research to date has underplayed. Major candidates for such further work include a range of explanatory frameworks regarding the causes, courses and consequences of global multistakeholder regimes. Other shortfalls on theory appear regarding normative analyses of distributive justice, as well as studies of accountability, human rights, and legitimacy.

Definitions

As noted at the outset, what this report calls ‘multistakeholder’ global governance goes under a host of different names in the literature. This terminological variety reflects diverse interpretations of the object of study. For example, students of ‘private global governance’ tend to emphasize the corporate-led quality of many recent institutional innovations in global regimes. Research on ‘transnational governance’ tends to stress the informal and voluntary features of much contemporary global regulation. The optimistic language of ‘partnerships’ is often favoured among policymakers and consultants who wish to see immediate problems solved. Meanwhile the language of ‘multistakeholderism’ tends to direct attention to the changing character of participation and representation in global governance.

Most publications on multistakeholder arrangements start with a summary working definition – usually following the broad lines laid out in the introduction to this report – and then move on quickly to the substance of their analysis. However, certain works give extended careful attention to matters of definition. Most of these more probing discussions aim to achieve a ‘better’ and ‘more precise’ definition,⁷⁹ or even to identify the ‘essential elements’ and ‘shared beliefs’ of a multistakeholder design.⁸⁰ In one interesting exception, Hofmann seeks to deconstruct rather than pin down the multistakeholder concept, treating the notion as a discourse that generates much aspiration and inevitable disappointment.⁸¹ Another article problematizes the public-private distinction in definitions of multistakeholder arrangements.⁸²

In a further definitional exercise, researchers have devised various typologies of multistakeholder global governance.⁸³ Each such matrix tends to address the particular research concerns of the author in question. Indeed, it is probably pointless to seek a definitive typology of global multistakeholder initiatives that would have general applicability across all investigations into the subject. That said, Abbott and Snidal have constructed a ‘governance triangle’ on which one can plot the various global multistakeholder institutions depending on the relative roles that they accord to the state, business, and NGOs.⁸⁴

Explanations: Causes

Alongside attention to defining multistakeholderism, theoretical work has also explored the forces that propel this alternative to traditional intergovernmentalism. Why and how has multistakeholder global governance spread, particularly over recent decades? The most common answer – given also early in this report – is that multistakeholder initiatives respond to governance deficits in an era of accelerated globalization. Such an explanation holds that

⁷⁹ Coulby 2009; Mena and Palazzo 2012; Doria 2014; Pattberg and Widenberg 2014; Raymond and DeNardis 2015; Marx 2017; Strickling and Hill 2017: 298-300; HLPE 2018: 35-40.

⁸⁰ MSI 2017b; Gleckman 2018; ch 4.

⁸¹ Hofmann 2016.

⁸² Marx 2017.

⁸³ Susskind et al. 2003: 241, 245; Mikheyev 2005; Fransen and Kolk 2007: 679; Martens 2007: 23; Pattberg and Widenberg 2014: 12; Raymond and DeNardis 2015: 583; Beisheim and Simon 2016.

⁸⁴ Abbott and Snidal 2009.

old-style multilateralism has failed to keep pace with demands for increased global regulation to meet today's more global world, and multistakeholder arrangements have stepped in to fill the gaps.⁸⁵ Hence the multistakeholder form answers a major functional need of our time.

Yet this general observation does not explain why the response to contemporary global governance shortfalls has so often taken a multistakeholder form (in various guises) rather than some other type of governance innovation. Why has global multistakeholderism made such large advances in recent history, instead of for example translocal governance among global cities, or world federalism, or a more radical transformation of global order? Moreover, why have global multistakeholder arrangements taken the specific forms that they do, for example, with soft voluntary law, with prominent roles for business and civil society associations, and with main leadership from North America and Western Europe? To get at such questions we need more probing explanatory theories, discussed here through a fourfold typology of legal, institutional, practice, and structural accounts.

The first category, legal explanations, focuses on the role of regulatory measures in establishing, developing, and sustaining multistakeholder global governance. Several legal studies have highlighted how constitutional instruments, executive directives, court rulings, and other matters of law shape particular global multistakeholder arrangements.⁸⁶ Of course, a further question arises as to what forces in wider society make the law take the forms that it does; however, strictly legal analyses of global multistakeholderism leave this black box unopened. Hence, more *socio*-legal analyses – i.e. which place the law of multistakeholder governance in its social context – would be welcome.⁸⁷

The literature also currently includes little broader legal analysis of the overall global multistakeholder phenomenon. We therefore have limited knowledge of how this form of global governance relates to, and perhaps changes, the character of law. As a starting point, it would be helpful to have a reference work that assembles in one place the various

⁸⁵ Cf. Hemmati 2002; Jerbi 2012: 1029-30; Green 2013: 14-16; Baumann-Pauly et al. 2015; Zeyen et al. 2016: 341; Berman 2017: 205.

⁸⁶ Weber 2011, 2014; Marx and Wouters 2016; Mahler 2019.

⁸⁷ Cf. Halliday and Shaffer 2015.

constitutional instruments that underpin global multistakeholder initiatives across different issue areas. Legal scholars could use such a database to undertake systematic research into global multistakeholderism as a distinctive form of law, separate from traditional international law. More work might relate multistakeholder arrangements to the emergent field of 'global administrative law'.⁸⁸ In addition, a legal database could inform (as yet lacking) research on how far the formal rules of multistakeholder global governance are followed in practice, as well as how different legal setups influence effectiveness, democracy and fairness in the respective global multistakeholder regimes.

A second category of explanations, institutional accounts, highlights the role of actor initiatives and organizational dynamics in the development of multistakeholder global governance. Most existing literature on global multistakeholderism adopts some kind of institutional perspective, arguing that these mechanisms emerge because certain individuals activate certain institutional processes.⁸⁹ For example, an institutional account might explain the creation of global multistakeholder schemes for corporate social responsibility by noting that certain policy entrepreneurs have responded to consumer pressure for more ethical global business.⁹⁰ A number of studies highlight the role of institutional power dynamics in the development of global multistakeholder institutions, albeit that these analyses do not always conceptualize 'power' very precisely.⁹¹ Still other institutional accounts pick out a specific aspect of interactions that shapes the evolution of a global multistakeholder institution, such as leadership,⁹² capacity,⁹³ emotion and trust,⁹⁴ issue definition,⁹⁵ or experimentalism.⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the question of 'orchestration' enquires into interactions in global governance between different forms of institutions,⁹⁷ albeit that this line of research

⁸⁸ Raustiala 2002; Kingsbury and Krisch 2006; Cassese et al. 2012.

⁸⁹ Bisht 2009; Zeyen et al. 2016; Marx and Wouters 2018; Schneiker and Joachim 2018; De Bakker et al. 2019; Fransen et al. 2020.

⁹⁰ O'Rourke 2003.

⁹¹ Antonova 2007, 2008; Cammaerts 2011; Brouwer et al. 2013; Cheyns and Riisgaard 2014; Wong 2014; Carr 2015; Ydersbond 2016; Menashy 2018.

⁹² Bisht 2008.

⁹³ Matus 2014.

⁹⁴ Sloan and Oliver 2013.

⁹⁵ Auld 2014.

⁹⁶ Overdeest and Zeitlin 2014; Malets 2017.

⁹⁷ Abbott et al. 2015.

has not yet focused more specifically on the relationship between global multistakeholder institutions and intergovernmental organizations. In another perhaps surprising omission, very few publications have examined the impact of funders and funding mechanisms on the shape and evolution of global multistakeholder institutions. Moreover, the handful of existing studies of financing look at ‘ancillary’ multistakeholderism within the UN system rather than the political economy of ‘executive’ multistakeholder global governance.⁹⁸

In a third category, a smaller set of explanatory writings on multistakeholder global governance has ventured into practice theories. These investigations examine how actors make and ‘perform’ governance (e.g. with objects and routines). Relevant practices could include bureaucratic rituals, dress codes, office layouts, patterns of friendship, deployments of language, and so on. Often backed by rich ethnographic fieldwork, practice theories provide micro accounts of how global multistakeholderism is ‘done’.⁹⁹ For example, Hofmann’s deconstruction mentioned above explains the spread of multistakeholderism in terms of certain routine narratives that provide the driving force behind these initiatives.¹⁰⁰ Köhne has drawn upon the practice-oriented concept of ‘assemblage’ to make sense of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil.¹⁰¹ More work on practice theories of multistakeholderism could open up further insights on how this mode of global governance operates from day to day, inter alia by drawing upon actor-network theory.¹⁰²

A fourth category, structural theories, seeks to explain the rise of multistakeholder global governance in terms of forces connected with the wider patterns of social order. Such accounts say that global multistakeholder arrangements develop not (only) because of the laws, organizations, and practices that are directly involved, but (also) because of the prevailing larger configurations of world order. Thus, while actors and their actions are necessary to create and sustain multistakeholder global governance, the social structure of the moment gives general shape and direction to these behaviours.

⁹⁸ Faul 2016; Harman 2016; Andonova 2018.

⁹⁹ Pouliot and Thérien 2018.

¹⁰⁰ Hofmann 2016, 2019.

¹⁰¹ Köhne 2014.

¹⁰² Latour 2005; Best and Walters 2013.

In a structural vein, for example, several political economy analyses have explained the spread of global multistakeholderism in the context of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. According to this theoretical perspective, multistakeholder forms of global governance have arisen in a particular historical moment of liberalizing, privatizing, and globalizing surplus accumulation. As ‘corporatism goes global’,¹⁰³ these accounts suggest, multistakeholder arrangements are a way that business, state and civil society agree on a (relatively non-intrusive) regulation that sustains the ongoing globalization of liberal capitalism.¹⁰⁴ Additional research could further develop this line of explanation, especially by elaborating the theory in relation to empirical study of specific instances of multistakeholder global governance.

A few scattered works have ventured other kinds of structural explanation for the rise of multistakeholder global regimes. For example, Antonova has treated multistakeholderism in global Internet governance as an instance of Foucauldian governmentality.¹⁰⁵ Hill has enquired whether multistakeholderism might be a new guise of colonialist-imperialist world order.¹⁰⁶ Grosser has raised feminist questions about gender structures in the multistakeholder governance of corporate social responsibility.¹⁰⁷ My own research has suggested a concept of ‘complex hegemony’ to help explain the development of multistakeholder regimes in global Internet governance. On this multifaceted account, global multistakeholder initiatives have emerged due to a combination of sponsorship by leading states, enactment by a transnational elite network, capitalist drives for global accumulation, and certain dominant discourses.¹⁰⁸

Each of these short forays into alternative lines of structural explanation wants fuller development. The dearth of feminist, postcolonial and poststructuralist research means that we have limited knowledge of how embedded power hierarchies (e.g. of culture, gender and

¹⁰³ Ottaway 2001.

¹⁰⁴ Chenou 2014; Gurstein 2014; Utting 2014; Moog et al. 2015; Gleckman 2016; McKeon 2014, 2017a, 2018; Bartley 2018.

¹⁰⁵ Antonova 2007.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Brown 2010; Hill 2014a.

¹⁰⁷ Grosser 2016. See also Cammaerts 2011.

¹⁰⁸ Scholte 2020.

geopolitics) could skew global multistakeholderism in favour of already privileged circles in world politics. Critical structural perspectives could fundamentally reconfigure knowledge and practice of multistakeholder global governance, possibly pushing both research and policy in more egalitarian and emancipatory directions.

In sum, carefully theorized explanations of the development of global multistakeholderism are an important area for further investigation. Particularly promising – albeit highly challenging to execute – would be accounts that combine legal theory's attention to regulatory measures, institutional theory's attention to organizational processes, practice theory's attention to the everyday, and structural theory's attention to social-order conditions.

Among other things, fully developed explanatory analysis would help us to assess whether the recent growth of multistakeholder global governance has ephemeral or deep-seated sources. Are circumstances conducive to a continued spread of global multistakeholderism or could shifts in context (such as recent rises in anti-globalism in many parts of the world or global emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic) reverse the trend?

Identifying the forces that drive global multistakeholderism can also help to raise the potentials of these regimes to produce effective, democratic and fair outcomes. After all, different explanations of what makes global multistakeholder arrangements tick point to different strategies for improved performance. For example, a legal account can suggest that the key to better multistakeholder global governance lies in better constitutions, whereas a structural argument can suggest that deeper transformations of world order are required.

Explanations: Consequences

Having reviewed research on the sources and causes of multistakeholder global governance, we now shift attention to the outcomes. Theory can shed light not only on drivers of global multistakeholderism (i.e. what flows into these initiatives), but also on its impacts (i.e. what flows out from them). How do global multistakeholder arrangements affect global challenges; and could adjustments to these regulatory frameworks improve results?

In response to such questions, many works have offered impact assessments of global multistakeholder initiatives, identifying their various promises and problems.¹⁰⁹ These studies often seek furthermore to explain (usually in terms of institutional factors) why multistakeholder regimes succeed and fail.¹¹⁰ Building on such findings and ‘lessons learned’, a number of publications offer ‘how to’ guides for designing, implementing, and evaluating effective (global) multistakeholderism.¹¹¹ Various writings suggest certain ‘good’ and ‘best’ practices of multistakeholder global governance.¹¹² Others identify particular organizational reforms that could purportedly raise the effectiveness of these regimes in achieving their goals and solving global problems.¹¹³

Yet this extensive research on problem-solving through global multistakeholderism remains rather scattered. The absence of synthesizing analysis is again telling. We lack academic literature that brings together the many empirical investigations – from across issue-areas – and systematically consolidates general knowledge about the effectiveness of the multistakeholder type of global institutional design.¹¹⁴ A few ‘pracademic’ (i.e. practitioner-oriented academic) reports go part way down this road,¹¹⁵ although such work can be tempted to present quick and easy solutions. An important need remains for academically rigorous overall assessments of, for example, the optimal role of the state in multistakeholder

¹⁰⁹ Turcotte and Pasquero 2001; Utting 2002, 2014; Susskind et al. 2003; Biermann et al. 2007; Fransen and Kolk 2007; Wigell 2008; Savage and McConnell 2015; Lundsgaarde 2016; HLPE 2018.

¹¹⁰ Waddell 2005; Truex and Søreide 2010; Pattberg and Widerberg 2014, 2016; Menashy 2017; Rustad et al. 2017.

¹¹¹ Vallejo and Hauselmann 2005; Coulby 2009; Van Huijstee 2012; Tapscott 2014; World Bank 2014; Brouwer and Woodhill 2015; Stern et al. 2015; MSI 2017a; Adams and Mills 2018; MacDonald et al. 2019.

¹¹² Brinkerhoff 2002; Brown 2007; Roloff 2008; Delsman and Lin 2012; Peterson 2013; Bollow and Hill 2014; Gitsham and Page 2014; MSI 2015a; Fowler and Biekart 2016, 2017; Gleckman 2018; ch 5.

¹¹³ Szulecki et al. 2011; Dentoni and Veldhuizen 2012; Jerbi 2012: 1043-5; De Brucker et al. 2013; Dentoni and Ross 2013; World Bank 2014; Dentoni and Bitzer 2015; Brockmyer and Fox 2015; Clarke and MacDonald 2019; Conca 2019; Macdonald et al. 2019; Soundarajan et al. 2019.

¹¹⁴ The recently finished project ‘Effectiveness of Partnerships for Advancing the SDGs’ intends to publish important broad findings on this subject: see <https://effectivenessofpartnerships.org/>.

¹¹⁵ Brockmyer and Fox 2015; Brouwer and Woodhill 2015.

global governance, the most effective accountability mechanisms for these new global regulators, and other issues of general institutional design.¹¹⁶

Normative assessments

The preceding sub-sections have considered explanatory theories: namely, accounts of how and why global multistakeholder initiatives arise; how and why they operate as they do; and how and why they impact on policy problems. Yet also important are normative theories: namely, accounts of whether global multistakeholder operations and outcomes are just. In short, is the multistakeholder turn in contemporary global governance a good thing? Are these arrangements deserving of legitimacy?

The literature includes several general normative assessments of global multistakeholderism.¹¹⁷ Enthusiasts champion the growth of these initiatives, embracing the multistakeholder principle as inherently more effective, democratic and fair than older forms of global governance.¹¹⁸ In contrast, critics regard global multistakeholderism as intrinsically riven with asymmetric power and special-interest capture.¹¹⁹ In between fall other authors who suggest that the benefits and harms of multistakeholder global governance do not follow from the model per se, but depend on contextual circumstances.¹²⁰

Not surprisingly, considerable normative commentary has focused on the democratic credentials of multistakeholder global governance.¹²¹ After all, as noted earlier, the very notion of ‘multistakeholder’ conveys a certain democratic promise that every group which is affected by a global challenge will have due say in constructing and executing the policy responses. Moreover, since multistakeholder processes often centre on dialogue and

¹¹⁶ For a related initiative, albeit more on ‘ancillary’ multistakeholderism, see ‘Gauging Global Governance: The Effectiveness of Transnational Public-Private Governance Initiatives and Intergovernmental Organizations’: <https://sites.google.com/view/globalgovernance/home>.

¹¹⁷ Lundsgaarde 2016. See also note 106.

¹¹⁸ E.g. Khagram 2006; Waddell and Khagram 2007; Waddell 2011; Strickling and Hill 2017.

¹¹⁹ E.g. Ottaway 2001; McKeon 2017a, 2018; Gleckman 2013, 2016, 2018; Berman 2017.

¹²⁰ E.g. Magno and Gatmaytan 2017; Wagner and Mindus n.d.

¹²¹ Bendell 2005; Bäckstrand 2006a; Dingwerth 2007; Schaller 2007; Bexell et al. 2010; DeNardis 2013; Bollow and Hill 2014, 2015; Gleckman 2018; Schneiker and Joachim 2018.

discussion, they have attracted particular attention from theorists of deliberative democracy.¹²² Other democracy research has judged global multistakeholderism on the extent that these processes in practice actually realize promises of diversity, inclusion and participation.¹²³ Several analyses have stressed the challenges that disadvantaged and marginalized people face to obtain voice in global multistakeholder fora.¹²⁴ Other work has highlighted themes of transparency and democratic accountability in global multistakeholderism.¹²⁵

The issue of accountability in particular wants additional and more critical scrutiny in research on multistakeholder global governance.¹²⁶ These regimes have often faced challenges over their accountability, particularly when they might cause harms. Indeed, a number of global multistakeholder institutions have laboured long and hard in pursuit of suitable accountability mechanisms.¹²⁷ Indeed, who answers for what happens (or does not happen) in a global multistakeholder regime? To whom is such an institution accountable, by what means, how effectively, and for what purpose? Lacking elections by universal suffrage and a conventional court system, multistakeholderism clearly involves different kinds of accountability than state-centred global governance, but how exactly does (or should) accountability operate in these alternative institutional designs? More research, both theoretical and empirical, is wanted on these matters.

Relatedly, more research could examine human rights as a potential framework for judging the accountability of global multistakeholder governance. As noted earlier, several studies have considered how global multistakeholder institutions affect human rights in a particular issue area such as the Internet, land tenure, and the conduct of transnational corporations.¹²⁸

¹²² Brown 2010; Brassett et al. 2012; Schouten et al. 2012; Nathan 2014; Schleifer 2014; Hahn and Weidtmann 2016; Alves Zanella et al. 2018; Martens et al. 2019.

¹²³ Cogburn 2006, 2009, 2017; Padovani and Pavan 2007; Cogburn et al. 2008; Cheyns 2011; Boström and Tamm Hallström 2010, 2013; Cheyns and Riisgaard 2014; Buckland-Merrett et al. 2017; Cheyns et al. 2017.

¹²⁴ Edmunds and Wollenberg 2001, 2002; Hintz and Milan 2009; Cheyns 2014; Cheyns and Riisgaard 2014; Colchester 2016; Daitch and Field 2016; Faul 2016; Gaarde 2017; Zajak 2017; Graz et al. 2020; Jongen and Scholte 2020.

¹²⁵ MSI 2015b; Beisheim and Simon 2016; Vian et al. 2017; Adams and Mills 2018; Schleifer et al. 2019b.

¹²⁶ Cf. Ebrahim and Weisband 2007; Scholte 2011.

¹²⁷ Cf. Koppell 2005.

¹²⁸ See note 64.

However, we lack research that evaluates the operations of multistakeholder global governance itself against human rights criteria, in the way that states and intergovernmental organizations are often judged on how well or poorly they live up to human rights standards. Certain global multistakeholder institutions have begun to build human rights into their mission statements and constitutional documents, and new lines of research could explore the opportunities and limitations of these commitments.¹²⁹

Also lacking is research on normative questions around distributive justice in and from multistakeholder global governance. Apart from one article concerning consumer protection,¹³⁰ existing literature offers little in the way of well-developed principles or detailed evidence for evaluating how fairly or otherwise the gains and harms of global multistakeholder apparatuses are shared among affected people. Thus the research agenda remains quite open regarding *for whom* and *for what purposes* global multistakeholderism is (more) effective: e.g., as between stakeholder sectors, between world regions, and between social groups.¹³¹ Do multistakeholder initiatives produce more just distribution of resources and power in today's global world; or might this alternative to traditional multilateral global governance in fact reinforce and expand world inequalities?¹³²

Before closing this survey of normative analysis, we should highlight important literature on the legitimacy of multistakeholder global regulation. Legitimacy refers to the belief and perception that a governor has a right to rule and exercises it appropriately. Research can explore *normative* legitimacy (i.e. philosophical judgements about the rightfulness of global multistakeholderism) and/or *sociological* legitimacy (i.e. whether the subjects of multistakeholder global governance themselves regard these regimes to have a right to rule and to exercise it appropriately).

¹²⁹ Ten Oever 2019.

¹³⁰ Marsden 2008.

¹³¹ Cf. De Bakker et al. 2019. See Clarke and MacDonald 2019 for a domestic study on respective stakeholder benefits within Canada.

¹³² McKeon 2017b.

Legitimacy is important. If people accord global multistakeholder arrangements legitimacy – namely, give these regimes underlying confidence and trust – then these new ways of handling global challenges can more readily attract participation, obtain resources, make decisions, gain compliance, solve problems, and withstand competition from other global institutions.¹³³ In contrast, without legitimacy global multistakeholder initiatives can struggle to achieve results or even to survive. So understanding legitimacy dynamics is crucial for the future of this mode of global governance.

Given the high significance of legitimacy for the viability of multistakeholder global governance, this subject wants more research attention than it has received to date. Several writings have addressed general issues of legitimacy as regards multistakeholder global governance.¹³⁴ In addition, certain studies have examined levels and sources of legitimacy in relation to a particular global multistakeholder apparatus.¹³⁵ A few works have investigated legitimation processes: that is, the practices that are deployed to promote confidence in global multistakeholder regimes.¹³⁶ On the other hand, no studies have yet examined the delegitimation practices that detractors of global multistakeholderism might use to undermine that confidence. All in all, then, legitimacy in multistakeholder global governance is understudied. Particularly welcome would be comparative studies (multi-case and cross-issue) which seek to identify crucial determinants that generate or remove legitimacy in respect of global multistakeholder regimes.

Conclusion

This report has surveyed an extensive body of academic and policy knowledge that has developed in respect of multistakeholder designs of global governance. The review has

¹³³ Sommerer and Agné 2018.

¹³⁴ Bäckstrand 2006b; Bernstein and Cashore 2007; Mena and Palazzo 2012; Mele and Schepers 2013; Moratis 2017.

¹³⁵ Dingwerth 2007; Fuchs et al. 2011; Marx et al. 2012; Take 2012; Doty and Mulligan 2013; Marx 2014; Baumann-Pauly et al. 2015; Hahn and Weidtmann 2016; Kuchler 2017; Malets 2017; Boersma 2018; Niedziałkowski and Shkaruba 2018; Jongen and Scholte 2019, 2020; Nasiritousi and Verhaegen 2019.

¹³⁶ Fransen 2012; Schouten and Glasbergen 2012; Bäckstrand and Kylsäter 2014; Loconto and Fouilleux 2014; Brem-Wilson 2018; Schleifer 2015, 2019.

identified several areas of particular strength, including compact overviews of the phenomenon, single case studies, evaluations of organizational effectiveness, and democracy assessments. To be sure, more knowledge is still wanted in these four areas; however, relatively speaking the existing literature covers these topics and approaches more fully than others.

The review has also identified notable gaps in knowledge of multistakeholder global governance. These relative lacunae, as detailed earlier, include:

- larger synthesizing work
- multi-case and cross-issue comparisons
- large-*n* and survey data
- multicultural perspectives
- legal, practice and structural explanations
- distributive justice assessments
- studies of accountability, human rights, and legitimacy

Arguably these areas could want relatively higher priority in future research (and its funding).

Greater knowledge of multistakeholderism warrants substantial priority in global governance research going forward. Multistakeholder designs have become widespread across many crucial fields of global policy, and indications are that this alternative to intergovernmental global governance will spread to key future global challenges as well. Like it or not, global multistakeholderism is here to stay, in substantial proportions, and it needs full research attention in order to advance its potential benefits and reduce its potential problems.

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