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Global Public Policy, Transnational Policy Communities and their Networks

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**Global Public Policy,
Transnational Policy Communities and their Networks**

Abstract

Public policy has been a prisoner of the word ‘state’”. The state is 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. Accordingly, this paper asks what is ‘global public policy’? The first part of the paper identifies new public spaces where global policies occur. These spaces are multiple in character and variety and will be collectively referred to as the ‘global *agora*’. The second section adapts the conventional policy cycle heuristic by conceptually stretching it to the global and regional levels to reveal the higher degree of pluralization of actors and multiple authority structures than is the case at national levels. The third section asks: Who is involved in the delivery of global public policy? The focus is on transnational policy communities. The global agora is a public space of policy-making and administration, although it is one where authority is more diffuse, decision making is dispersed and sovereignty 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.

Key words: public policy, agora, globalization, transnational networks

Word count: 8,845

Introduction

The concept of 'global public policy' is not well established. Accordingly, this paper asks what is global public policy, where is it enacted, and who executes such policies? The first part of the paper sets out to delimit the discussion to transnational policy spaces where global public policies occur. These spaces are multiple in character and variety and will be collectively referred to as the 'agora'. This section also addresses what is 'global public policy' and some difficulties with the use of the term or its synonyms as well as the way in which some higher education institutions are responding.

The second section conceptually stretches the conventional policy cycle heuristic to the global and regional levels. The policy cycle concept is used as an analytical device (not as a portrayal of decision making realities). It is done to reveal the higher degree of pluralization of actors as well as the multiple and contested modes of authority than is usually the case at national levels of policy making. It is also adopted to make the point that the mainstream study of public policy can ill-afford to disregard these policy processes and new administrative structures.

The third section asks: Who is involved in the delivery of global public policy? The discussion addresses the roles of policy networks. The activities of transnational policy communities reveal the dual dynamics of new public spaces carved out in tandem with privatising modes of decision making. In other words, "globalization makes such publicness more problematic ... reshaping multi-level governance around various 'new architectures' that will recreate the 'public' either at a higher level or through a more complex network structure" (Cerny, 2006: 105).

Some policy scholars have addressed global policy dynamics (*inter alia*,

Baltodano, 1997; Evans, 2004; Soroos, 1999). First, there are analyses of the ‘internationalisation of the public sector’ (for instance: Ladi, 2005). Second, there are sectoral or issue specific studies of elements of global public policy. Analyses of ‘global trade policy’ (Xu and Weller, 2005), ‘global environmental policy (Haas, 2000), or aspects of ‘global health policy’ are readily found. But, there has been little reflection on the commonality and differences concerning the process dynamics across these sectors. Third, over, the past decade there has been a raft of debate and discussion of the public policies of the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and United Nations (UN) agencies, amongst others. However, accounts of globalized policy processes – distinct from national processes – are few and far between.

1. Public Spheres and Private Policy Practice in the Global Agora

If global public policy is distinct and to some extent delinked from national processes of policy making, the venues in which such policy action occurs need not be tied to sovereign structures of decision-making. This is not to suggest a divorce between global and national policy processes. However, national public institutions no longer serve as the sole organizing center for policy. Instead, it is necessary to “look at the restructuring of the playing field itself” (Cerny, 2006: 97); that is, the historical and structural changes to the ‘state’ and ‘sovereignty’. Through the reinvention of a Greek political term, this re-structured playing field will be referred to as the ‘global agora’.

The Global Agora

The notion of ‘agora’ is a more familiar concept in studies of Athenian history and

politics but has been stretched conceptually to the global arena. At its simplest, the term is meant to mean a marketplace or a public square. While it is commonplace in the contemporary era to see the ‘marketplace’ and the ‘public square’ as distinct domains, such boundaries were neither clear nor fast in the Greek agora. Importantly, the ‘agora’ was not only a marketplace but the heart of intellectual life and public discourse.

In ancient times, the agora was a physical place as well as a social and political space (Wycherley, 1942: 21). The public landscape included the Mint, shrines and statuary, shops and law-courts, the market hall and the council house, and the Assembly. Evidence from archaeological digs – public documents inscribed on stone, weight and measure standards, and jurors' identification tickets and ballots – reflect the administrative nature of the site.¹ In short, the agora was a place for social, economic and political interaction. The boundaries were ill-defined and fluid where political activity was as likely to take place inside private shops (cobblers, barbers) as in public buildings. That is, the “commercial impinged upon the public buildings and shrines of the central Agora at many points, and probably on every side” (Wycherley, 1956: 10).

The merging and the blurring of the commercial and the public domains is apparent in the modern global era.

The agora embraces much more than the market and much more than politics. As a public space it invites exchanges of all kinds ... Although the agora is a structured space, it is wrong to attempt to subdivide into sectors like markets, politics or media (Nowotony et al, 2001: 209).

¹ The Athenian Agora Excavations: <http://www.agathe.gr/introduction.html>. See also: <http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~loxias/agora.htm>

The idea of agora is used here to identify a growing global public space of fluid, dynamic and intermeshed relations of politics, markets, culture and society. This public space is shaped by the interactions of its actors – that is, multiple publics and plural institutions. Some actors are more visible, persuasive or powerful than others. However, the global agora is a social and political space – generated by globalisation – rather than a physical place. Some have already adopted the term to speak of the agora as an electronic or virtual global commons (Arthur, 2001: 97; Alexander and Pal, 1998). The global agora is also a domain of relative disorder and uncertainty where institutions are underdeveloped and political authority unclear, and dispersed through multiplying institutions and networks. Similar to Plato’s Athenian agora when political discussions took place in the dwelling of a resident foreigner,² the sovereignty challenging features of global decision making in semi-private or quasi-public networks are increasingly apparent.

The global agora is normatively neutral. This is in contrast to a growing body of literature that advocates the need to democratize global governance and to enhance the legitimacy of international organisations (for example, the special edition in *Government and Opposition*, 2004). Without disputing the value of such advocacy, 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. Social scientists operate with a series of metaphors where the new vocabulary attempts to grasp new policy structures. They include:

- ‘Transnational public sphere’ (Nanz & Steffek, 2004) or the ‘global public

² In the scene that opens Plato’s *Republic*, the dialogue takes place in a metic household (that is, the home of a resident alien, the patriarch Cephalus and his son Polemarchus). Metics typically shared the burdens of citizenship with few of its privileges.

sphere' (Dryzek, 1999);

- 'The return of the public domain' (Drache, 2001);
- The 'global arena' (Ronit & Schneider, 2000) or 'global policy arena' (World Bank);³
- A 'playing field' of 'new levels and spaces' (Cerny, 2006);
- 'An acephalous ... modern global polity' (Drori, Meyer & Hwang, 2006: 14);

Some argue that the realisation of a democratic global order "ultimately depends on the creation of an appropriate public sphere" (Nanz & Steffek, 2004: 315). Yet, the emphasis is on what is 'appropriate' (read: deliberative) and the presumed progressive potential of global civil society in forging this sphere. Here, the transnational public sphere is conceived as a Habermasian "communicative network" (Nanz & Steffek, 2004: 322).

The concept of a 'global agora' makes no presumptions about the communicative, progressive or deliberative character of institutional or network interactions. The dynamics for exclusion, seclusion and division are just as likely. A 'global agora' 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.

As in the ancient Athenian agora, the global one is characterized primarily by lack of participation and elite rule. The majority of Athenian citizenry did not participate

³ "More than ever before, the Bank is playing an important role in *the global policy arena*." (my emphasis) From 'World Bank History:

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/EXTABOUTUS/EXTARCHIVES/0,,contentMDK:20053333~menuPK:63762~pagePK:36726~piPK:36092~theSitePK:29506,00.html>

directly in politics. Instead the Athenian agora was made up of three kinds of citizen:

... the passive ones' who did not go to Assembly; the standing participants who went to the assembly but listened and voted, and 'did not raise their voice in discussion'; and the 'wholly active citizens' (a small group of initiative takers who proposed motions) (Hansen quoted in Urbinatti, 762-63).

It is the 'wholly active citizens' in international non-governmental organisations, in international organisations, and in internationalized public agencies that drive global policy processes. While the global policy agora may have dimensions of 'publicness', the capacity for, and character of public action is much more varied.

In the Athenian agora, the Mint, shrines and statuary, shops and law-courts, the market hall and the council house, and the Assembly were all in physical proximity even if women, slaves, or resident foreigners had little participation in these forums. In the global agora, the international institutions are dispersed between Washington DC., the Hague, Geneva and Paris. The nodes of global finance are found in exclusive venues in New York, London, Tokyo and a few other global cities such as Basle or Davos. As discussed below, policy networks and self-regulation privatize decision making. Consequently, the institutional locations are dispersed and the boundaries of the global agora are ill-defined and fluid. Policy activity is as likely to take place inside private associations among non-state actors as in inter-governmental conferences. The vast majority of citizens of nation states are uninformed about these policy venues and even if interested, face significant obstacles 'to raise their voice'.

Global Public Policy

In the last decade, there has been increasing use of the term ‘global public policy’. Books have emerged under this title (Reinicke, 1999) or in the sub-field of ‘global social policy’ (Deacon, 2006). University courses in development studies or political science have been launched with this label. Yet, the term remains under-specified. It is used without definition by many scholars (*inter alia*, Held and Koenig Archibugi, 2004; True, 2003; Grugel & Peruzzotti, 2007). Generally, ‘global public policy’ has little resonance among policy elites and the general public.

Instead, other terms and concepts are better established in the lexicon. One of the most current terms is ‘global governance’. An alternative term is ‘governing without government’. At other times, ‘global policy’ is equated with the financing and delivery of global public goods (Kaul et al, 2003). Another synonym is the idea of ‘global public-private partnerships’ or the ‘global programs’ sponsored by the World Bank (2004). ‘Transnational constitutionalism’ is a phrase rarely encountered; indeed, these constitutional processes have emerged only in the European Union (Arthur, 2001: 107).

In classical political science, public policy occurs inside nation-states. In the field of international relations, a ‘realist’ perspective would also hold that states are the dominant actor in the international system and that international policies are made between states. With its strong tendency to ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002), traditional comparative public policy has compounded this stand-point. Scholars in the field usually compare policy development within and between states where states remain the key policy-making unit. That is, “... public administration has been a prisoner of the word ‘state’ ... (it) has assumed that the nation-state is the natural context

within which the practice of public administration has to be studied” (Baltodano, 1997: 618).

Moving beyond minimalist interpretations (of a realist-rationalist variety) that limits analysis to the capacity of public sector hierarchies to globalize national policies does not necessarily entail jumping to maximal positions (of an idealist-cosmopolitan character) that speak of deliberative world government. A complex range of state capacities, public action and democratic deliberation fall in between these two extremes. Scholars and practitioners alike are arguing that new forms of authority are emerging through global and regional policy processes that co-exist alongside nation-state processes. Governance can be informal and emerge from strategic interactions and partnerships of national and international bureaucracies with non-state actors in the marketplace and civil society (Reinicke & Deng, 2000).

However, economic globalisation and regional integration are proceeding at a much faster pace than processes of global government. One outcome of this disjuncture is that the power of the nation states has been reduced or reconfigured without a corresponding development of international institutional co-operation. This is one of the major causes of a deficiency of public goods at global levels. For example, the regulation of financial flows, environmental protection or intellectual property safe-guards are inadequately provided. UN agencies such as UNDP (Kaul, 2003) and UNIDO have become institutions central in researching and articulating dimensions of ‘publicness’ in the global sphere and how international organisations and non-state actors create global public goods or seek to regulate the adverse effects of global public bads.

Policy practice is moving faster than its paradigmatic parallels. The Westphalian

conceptual cage of a nation-state system has incapacitated critical thinking (Albert & Kopp-Malek, 2002). Multi-level polycentric forms of public policy in which a plethora of institutions and networks negotiate within and between international agreements and private regimes have emerged as pragmatic responses in the absence of formal global governance. If “public policy” is “whatever governments choose to do or not to do” (Dye, 1984: 2), then some governments are choosing to devolve aspects of public policy. This is a double devolution; first, beyond the nation-state to global and regional domains; and second, a delegation of authority to private networks and non-state actors.

An indicator of ‘global public policy’ is the extent to which it is, or is becoming, a field of teaching. Graduate programs in ‘global public policy’ are rare, but they provide insight into attempts to conceptualize, and operationalize for educational purposes, this field. The first of its kind in Germany, the mission of the graduate degree program in Global Public Policy at Potsdam University is a good example. It is:

Meeting the challenges posed by the *internationalization of policies* and economies, and the changing demands of citizens, requires political and economic leaders to rethink their roles and act appropriately. Increased economic and political interdependence worldwide has meant that events and decisions in one part of the world can have significant repercussions in others. Public Policy issues (e.g. Environmental protection or refugees) are increasingly "transnationalized", and require joint management by governments, private concerns, and the citizens concerned. At the same time, globalization has considerable impact on the ability of national governments

to deal with what were previously purely "domestic" policies (my emphasis).⁴

Similarly, the University of British Columbia offers a MA in Global Policy⁵, and the Fletcher School's Global Master of Arts Program⁶ is designed for the "international affairs professional" while the Masters in Public Policy at Central European University (CEU) emphasises 'international policy practice'.⁷ The CEU program has been criticised for developing an "elite that adheres to the ideology of globalization, is familiar with its main debates and tends to be compliant with its requisites"; that is, CEU is "training the administrators of globalisation" (Guilhot, 2007).

In developing and transition countries, international organisations are encouraging the establishment of new graduate programs. The World Bank has been more active in promoting graduate education in economics albeit with recent emphasis on the parallel need for 'good governance' (see Bourguignon, Elkana, and Pleskovic, 2007). UNDP and the EU have been active in advocating for public administration and public policy programs that can deal with problems of transition, development and globalization (Verheijen and Connaughton, 2003). Many other examples could be given. The point is that universities are adapting to their changing environment to provide education and training for young professionals who need the skills and knowledge to traverse global policy processes. As "expanding globalized institutions of science and expertise",

⁴ <http://www.mgpp-potsdam.de/>

⁵ UBC organizers state that: "Global problems transcend borders, defy regulation and cannot be solved by any single state no matter how powerful. Addressing these issues effectively requires new combinations of knowledge and action--it requires governments, international institutions and citizen-based networks working together in new and innovative ways."

<http://www.supporting.ubc.ca/priorities/faculties/grad/current/global.html>

⁶ Fletcher Dean, Deborah Nutter: <http://fletcher.tufts.edu/gmap/overview.html>

universities, their scholars and their students are drawn into, and structure, the global agora (Drori, Meyer and Hwang, 2006: 12).

2. Global Policy Processes

The global agora is expanding and diversifying. The state is not necessarily retreating or in decline. However, it is re-configuring with the dynamics of globalisation and remains an important or central agent in the agora. Yet, the constitution of the agora – its values, discourses, symbols, norms, institutions and practices (Arthur, 2001: 89) – are also created by other non-state actors that have acquired or appropriated public authority when responding unilaterally or in partnership to global policy problems. Global policy processes have emerged with governments, international organisations and non-state actors responding to three types of policy problems (Soroos, 1991):

- ‘transboundary problems’ of cross border movement money laundering, pollution or drug trafficking (see for instance, Raab & Milward, 2003);
- ‘common property problems’ regarding oceans, Antarctica, the atmosphere (see Haas, 2000);
- ‘simultaneous problems’ of nations experiencing similar problems in areas of education; health, welfare, urbanisation and population growth (see Deacon, 2006).

These problems have led to new forms of ‘soft’ authority or ‘soft law’ (Arthur, 2001) that complements the traditional ‘hard’ or formal authority of states and international organisations. ‘Soft’ authority is seen in the emergence of private regimes, global standard setting and transnational policy communities. The exercise of public and private authority

⁷ www.ceu.hu/dpp

through policy networks and law-like arrangements creates policy processes.

Adapting traditional concepts from policy studies highlights some of the difficulties in analytically capturing the idea of global public policy. One advantage of adapting this approach to the global levels is that it brings into relief the role of private actors and processes of self-regulation (Porter and Ronit, 2006). The common (overly sequential) heuristic device for the policy cycle is to divide it into four stages:

1. problem definition and agenda setting;
2. formal decision-making;
3. policy implementation
4. monitoring and evaluation.

These traditional elements of the ‘policy cycle’, as understood in domestic contexts, are conceptually stretched to the global context.⁸ This context is more fluid and lacks formal, authoritative and sovereign power. To-date, transnational public administration has also been less transparent than at the domestic level.

1. Problem Definition and Agenda Setting: There is no global decision making process, at least not in the sense understood in policy studies where there is an authoritative, sovereign decision maker. Consequently, at the global level, the ‘ownership’ of public problems is often characterized by a policy vacuum. Which countries or what institutions have responsibility for dealing with issues is not automatically apparent and if public goods are insufficient, those who take responsibility for their financing and provision is not self-evident. Contemporary social and civic regimes in the policy sectors of health, labour

standards and social inclusion are sectors where non-state activists have been prominent (Grugel and Peruzzotti, 2007; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; True, 2003). Agenda-setting is more contested, externalized beyond the nation-state and open to the input and disruption of a variety of political agents.

Some see this diversity of interests and institutions as a sign of a healthy and vibrant global civil society (Keck & Sikkink, 1998). That is, indicative of a pluralistic set of political pressures and countervailing power at the global level where the anti- and alter-globalisation movements voice their causes in the same domain as multi-national companies, the media, states and international organisations. The World Social Forum reacts to the agenda-setting or ‘opinion-forming’ aspirations of the World Economic Forum. Agenda-setting is characterized by cacophonous sets of debates and demands where it is unclear who, or what institution, has the authority or legitimacy to mediate. There are not only significant problems of negotiation and compromise, but also uncertainty concerning in which forums it is appropriate to advance issues. This has consequences for policy co-ordination and policy coherence alongside continuing conflict and power battles of who gets to set global agendas.

2. Policy Transfer and Formal Decision-Making: A difference in the policy process under globalisation would appear to be that ‘policy transfer’ is on the increase. Policy transfer is a process whereby knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements or institutions in one place is used across time or space in the development of policy elsewhere (Evans, 2004). An emerging but as yet not fully understood characteristic of the global era is the

⁸ This is not the place to enter debates about the utility of the policy stages model which has faced

manner in which some governments and international organisations become proactive in promoting cross-border policy harmonisation (especially in regional arrangements) or in exporting policy lessons. Privatisation policies, the spread of the Ombudsman institution (Ladi, 2005) and freedom of information laws, gender mainstreaming (see True, 2003) or the OECD's guidelines on budgetary best practices are examples of policy transfer and standard setting (Brütsch and Lehmkuhl, 2007).

There is no global forum for global decision making such as a 'world parliament' or 'global state'. However, international commissions such as those headed by Brandt, Palme and Brundtland function as venues for the official discussion of global public policies (see the essays in Thakur *et al.* 2005). When a problem is recognized by nations, the policy tools available are international treaties and conventions. Their effectiveness is problematically reliant on compliance and good international citizenship, and founded upon an implicit assumption that states will act 'rationally' and recognize that collective action is to long term interests.

The transnational dimensions of public policy and decision making is usually seen as the responsibility of international organisations such as the Bretton Woods institutions, regional associations such as the European Union or other bodies such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), Global Environment Facility and International Telecommunication Union. They have the scope and delegated powers to deal with specified common property and transboundary problems. These organisations do not have a global remit but are restricted by their charters to limited domains of responsibilities. These are disaggregated regimes that collectively create a complicated architecture of institutions, laws and

substantive criticism. It is a heuristic tool that provides 'partial answers' (Pielke, 2006: 11).

instruments.

Looking towards these organizations for coherent global responses to global policy problems, one finds serious unresolved co-ordination issues and overlapping responsibilities. This can lead to co-operation among international organisations but it also leads to ‘turf battles’ where authority is contested. Similarly, in the absence of enforcement capabilities and use of sanctions, non-compliance remains high.

Nevertheless, international organisations do develop policies to deliver global public goods. The World Bank is a good example. Through its Development Grant Facility, the Bank funds programs such as the Global Invasive Species Program; the Global Forum for Health Research; and the Global Gas Flaring Reduction Public-Private Partnership, amongst fifty-six other initiatives.⁹ These examples are only a snapshot of considerably more diverse activity of public policy being ‘spun-off’ to semi-autonomous networks and partnerships. Moreover, it is not restricted to international organisation. Business plays a role in multilateral initiatives: for example the Global Road Safety Partnership and the Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS. These global programs are sector or issue specific, executed through multiple public and private venues rather than a single executive authority.

3. Policy Implementation and International Co-ordination: There are major analytical problems when addressing public policy implementation in a global context. International organisations generally lack both the authority and the means to enforce policy

⁹<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/PROJECTS/EXTFININSTRUMENTS/EXTTRUSTFUNDSANDGRANTS/EXTDGF/0,,enableDHL:TRUE~menuPK:64283045~pagePK:64283090~piPK:64283077~theSitePK:458461,00.html>

compliance. On the whole, implementation is dependent on international co-operation and states behaving as responsible 'international citizens' to keep their commitments as well as educating electorates and convincing them of the real impact of global problems on local communities. There are few sanctions that can be employed against recalcitrant states except for engineering consensus, moral pressure from other states, trade sanctions and at the extreme, military intervention. At official levels, there considerable policy rhetoric for joint commitment, co-financing or aid harmonisation, all of which represent pleas for policy co-ordination. Time consuming processes of consensus building, the diplomatic pressures for compromise, the sources of opposition, and the resource implications of developing global policy programs significantly delay state co-ordinated international action.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, on issues ranging from organized crime and terrorism to human rights, the environment, finance, and trade, it is increasingly evident that government officials are exchanging information, coordinating policies, enforcing laws, and regulating markets through increasingly elaborate informal intergovernmental channels. Public policy is enacted in the decentralized (and less visible) activity of judges, regulators, and legislators working with foreign counterparts on specific issues (Slaughter, 2004). This is horizontal intergovernmental networking on transboundary problems. For instance, issue specific policy fields that generate networked bodies like the International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS)¹⁰, the Basle Committee¹¹ or the International

¹⁰ IAIS: <http://www.iaisweb.org/>

¹¹ The committee is not a classical multilateral organization. It has no founding treaty, and it does not issue binding regulation. Instead, its main function is to act as an informal forum to find policy solutions and to promulgate standards.

Network on Environmental Compliance and Enforcement (INECE)¹² for functional coordination and policy cooperation.

‘Global public policy networks’ are of a more mixed character than ‘intergovernmental networks’ identified above. They are composed of business, NGOs and other civil society actors, governments and international organisations. Examples include the Global Environmental Facility (Haas, 2000), the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI)¹³ and the Global Water Partnership.¹⁴ Actors build consensus, pool their authority, engage in collective decision making, share policy responsibilities and program funding; that is ‘soft’ authority. These ‘global public policy networks’ (sometimes called ‘transnational public-private partnerships’) are quasi-public or semi-private. They can be contrasted with private regimes. For instance, bond rating agencies (Sinclair, 2005) and the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) are different types of private actors that perform global roles of accreditation and co-ordination respectively (Ronit & Schneider, 2000).

More generally, the emergence and spread of legal and law-like arrangements mean that states cooperate in more or less precise, binding and independent regimes, but also that non-state actors can engage in the framing, definition, implementation and enforcement of these norms and rules (Brütsch and Lehmkuhl, 2007). However, global standards and best practices that may be adopted in OECD countries are far less likely to be seen in failed states; consequently the pattern of implementation is also highly uneven and contingent. At the same time, there may be on-going shifts in the balance of power

¹² INECE: <http://www.inece.org/>)

¹³ GAVI: www.gavialliance.org

¹⁴ Global Water Partnership: www.gwpforum.org

between different international organisations, and continual contests for ‘forum switching’ of global issues and responsibilities.

4. Transnational Monitoring and Evaluation: Reflection on success and failure potentially promotes efficiency, innovation and learning in policy. At the national level, evaluation is usually undertaken ‘in-house’ by national bureaucracies, commissions of inquiry or audit agencies. In global spheres, evaluation comes from various sources. The international financial institutions often have an in-house capacity for research and evaluation that bolsters their sovereignty challenging policies. For instance, the intellectual homogeneity and professional strength of the economists within the international financial and trade institutions is well recognized.

Sometimes evaluation is contracted out to private sector experts and advisers. Unsolicited advice and evaluation comes from NGOs and social movements. The sheer volume of knowledge, expertise and advice cannot all be incorporated and potentially creates incoherence, conflict and gridlock. There is a need for translators and interpreters of analysis, and for ‘knowledge management’ systems. Such experts who edit and vouch the credibility of information and analysis acquire power and potentially become ‘gate keepers’ in determining what meets international standards and best practice. Rather than operating independently, they are often to be found in transnational networks of think tanks, consultants, university policy centres, professional bodies, and consultancy firms. In the weak institutional context of the global agora, these policy actors are arguably more influential in shaping the parameters of policy making, defining problems and specifying what constitutes ‘global public goods’ and selling their ‘expert evaluation’ services than

they are within the confines of the nation-state.

Order and chaos in global policy processes

The model of the policy cycle depicts a linear model of policy moving from one stage to the next. In reality, policy making is messy. It is more accurate to conceptualize the policy process as “a chaos of purposes and accidents” (Juma and Clarke, 1995). This is apparent at national levels, but even more so beyond the authority structures of ‘sovereign’ nation-states. A major theme in the conceptual literature on public policy is a prescriptive one of making the policy process more rational. However, to search for signs of an orderly or stable global policy process is misguided. Global policy processes are more fluid and fragmented than might be found in stable political systems of most OECD nations. Instead, disorder and unpredictability is the norm. Due to the vast differences in policy style, structure, institutional set-up, powers and resources of global policy arrangements and regulatory frameworks, there is no consistent pattern of global policy processes. To the contrary, the bewildering array of public action is complicated by its often semi-private composition. The absence of, or constantly contested, authority structures within the global agora mean far greater time and effort is also spent convening, debating and negotiating in arenas created by interlocutors in order to promote compliance rather than exert enforcement (Porter and Ronit, 2006: 57).

This disjointed pattern of policy processes is enhanced by the ‘new public management’ with its ethos of contracting out, ‘freeing’ managers and market incentivisation (Kettl, 2005). However, where this managerial paradigm for the public sphere focuses on devolution to sub-national units of governance, analysis has missed the equally apparent devolution to supra-national and intergovernmental models of

governance. The public domain is not under threat; instead it is 'state-ness' that is under stress (Drache, 2001: 40). As a corollary, public-ness is expanding as the global agora takes shape.

The forces of globalization have complicated and contradicted traditional state-guided structures of policy, regulation, participation and protest. Public policy in the global agora is characterized by "the coexistence and multilayered interaction of not just national states and traditional international institutions, but also various regimes and governance institutions, transnational linkages and networks, local and regional institutions (whether sub-national/regional like cities or development zones, or international/regional like free trade areas and the European Union), private regimes and webs of governance" (Cerny, 2006: 105). State, civil society and market actors are imbricated in these webs of policy practice.

3. Transnational Policy Communities

Scholarly investigation of those who execute or implement global public policies has long been underdeveloped (Weiss, 1982). Attention is now being paid to individual agents of policy making with attempts to get inside the 'black box' of international organisations (see Xu and Weller, 2005; Gulrajani, 2007).

"More specifically, the staff of certain international organizations have a substantial degree of discretion in formulating and implementing policies, and thus should be regarded as distinct actors in global governance" (Held & Keonig Archibugi, 2004: 128).

The concern is to address the roles, powers and impacts of what has been variously

described as “international civil servants” (Weiss, 1982); or “supranational bureaucrats” (Held & Keonig Archibugi, 2004: 128) who are also the ‘wholly active citizens’ in the global agora; those who are proposing and implementing global public policy. It is useful to dis-aggregate these actors into three general types. The umbrella term ‘transnational policy community’ will be used for the three types. They are the carriers of global policy processes, involved in the diffusion of ideas, standards and policy practice.

First, is the ‘internationalised public sector official’. This is the type of individual (described by Anne Marie Slaughter, 2004) who operate in ‘transnational executive networks’. Slaughter argues that the state is not disappearing but that it is becoming disaggregated and penetrated by horizontal networks existing between ‘high level official officials directly responsive to the national political process – the ministerial level – as well as between lower level national regulators’ (2004: 19). These networks of judges, legislators or regulators are intergovernmental in character and the state remains core. What makes her idea of network ‘public’ is that actors who compose them are formally designated power holders and rule makers who derive their authority from their official positions within their nation-state. Examples of such networks include the International Association of Insurance Supervisors or INECE.

Second, ‘international civil servants’ are employed by an international organisation to staff its secretariat and institute operations. They are not state delegates. The conventional paradigm of international civil service includes impartiality, objectivity and international loyalty rather than national particularism (Weiss, 1982: 288-92). The reality of international administration is more complex, where national interests continue to be pursued. In international organisations, civil servants have considerable capacity to

shape (or delay) policies due to their expertise, routines and positions of power (Xu and Weller, 2005). The relative lack of analysis of these actors, or a tendency to treat them as conforming to the conventional paradigm, combined with the lack of transparency of most international organisations, means their roles as global policy implementers and their contributions to policy innovation are rarely open to public scrutiny.

Third, is the emergence of ‘transnational policy professionals’. This is a diverse community of consultants, foundation officers, business leaders, scientific experts, think tank pundits and NGO executives who are growing in number, policy reach and professionalism. Their status as either public or private agents is not always clear cut. Private consultants are contracted by public bodies, and private experts are co-opted into official advisory bodies. Rather than acting individually, they are usually found in a network or association that is often in receipt of public support and/or patronage.

All three categories of actors interact in varying degree with each other to facilitate multilateral co-operation and the delivery of global public goods. It is increasingly evident to see individuals building careers across all three categories. Their sources of power and influence vary. In general, however, they hold power as a result of their (semi-)official position; their control of information and other organisational resources; their technical expertise or epistemic authority; or their often lengthy international experience as career officials and consultants. They are agents in the galaxy of transnational networks that are the vehicles for policy processes.

Transnational Policy Networks

Networks, coalitions and multilateral partnerships contribute to the shape,

diversity and (in)equality of the global agora. Networks can be thought of as creating spaces of assembly in the global agora. They are potentially a means for civic engagement and a vehicle for expanding participation. This is neatly captured in the social movement character of ‘transnational advocacy coalitions’ (TANs). These networks accommodate a range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists. TANs are bound together by shared values or ‘principled beliefs’ and a shared discourse where the dominant modality is information exchange. They are called advocacy networks because ‘advocates plead the causes of others or defend a cause or proposition’ (Keck & Sikkink, 1998: 8). For instance, a TAN emerged around the theme of ‘blood diamonds’ or ‘conflict diamonds’ (Shaw et al, 2005) in part as a response to the covert ‘dark network’ mode of operation of arms traffickers (Raab & Milward, 2003). TANs usually have a strong normative basis for moral judgement in seeking to shape the climate of public debate and influence global policy agendas. However, they are not well integrated into policy making and tend to operate more like ‘outsider groups’.

The ‘agora’ is also an economic sphere of commerce and market exchange. In this regard, networks can be a force for ‘market deepening’. Business-related networks such as the European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) or the Transatlantic Business Dialogue (TABD) have an advocacy orientation.¹⁵ They operate more as ‘insider groups’ given their closer connections with governments. Networks with a social movement or interest group character are usually more prominent in agenda setting.

By contrast, transnational executive networks described above have greater executive authority where government officials have a dual domestic and international

function. Networks become tools for the maintenance of sovereignty where global problems are solved by ‘networked government’ responses. As mechanisms for the state to re-invent itself, transnational executive networks offer a system of ‘checks and balances’ to ensure accountability and public responsiveness (Slaughter, 2004: 29).

The global public policy networks described earlier on page 18., are tri-sectoral in character, and different yet again in their public-ness and sources of authority. Although the term corporatism has fallen out of fashion and the “operative word today is partnership”, this framework has considerable applicability (Ottaway, 2001: 266) for arrangements like GAVI or the Global Water Partnership.

Knowledge networks and epistemic communities give discursive, intellectual and scientific structure to the global agora (Stone, 2005). They provide scholarly argumentation and scientific justification for ‘evidence based’ policy formulation. The transnationalisation of research and policy analysis industries is readily apparent. Knowledge networks of likeminded think tanks are commonplace including PASOS in Central and Eastern Europe or the Network of Democracy Research Institutes.¹⁶ One long term regional venture—the Asian Fisheries Social Science Research Network—has formalised as a part of the World Fish Center. Epistemic communities are said to be ‘scientific’ in membership (Haas, 2000). They have common notions of validity based on inter-subjective, internally defined criteria for validating knowledge which galvanize members towards a common policy enterprise. They seek privileged access to decision-making venues on the basis of their expertise and knowledge. Technocratic in design, the

¹⁵ ERT is a personal membership organisation of 46 chiefs of European companies: www.ert.be. TABD companies work with governments to foster regulatory co-operation: www.tabd.org

¹⁶ PASOS: <http://www.pasos.org/> NDRI: <http://www.wmd.org/ndri>

concept builds in (social) scientific knowledge as an independent force in policy development. Scientific consensus seeking among scientific experts is considered to promote learning and a transformation of interests that converge around policy choices in favour of the public interest (Nanz & Steffek, 2004: 319). Critics highlight how scientific expertise is used for ideological purposes of ‘paradigm maintenance’ and the normalisation of discourses of power (Bull, Boas and McNeill, 2004; Stone 2005). Typically, knowledge networks and epistemic communities overlap with one of the types of policy networks outlined above or build alliances with governments and international organisations.

The different varieties of networks that intersect and help compose public spaces can be a force for democratisation by creating a venue for representation of ‘stakeholder’ interests, a means for wider participation in modes of global governance and a venue for societal voices. In short, networks are ‘gateways’. However, these same networks can also be exclusive, elite and closed to deliberative decision-making. For instance, the discourse and techno-scientific language as well as professional credentials of those within knowledge networks can be a form of ‘gate keeping’. Policy debate in the agora need not be democratic. Instead, as in the Athenian agora (Urbinati, 2000), the global agora is managed by the elite transnational policy community.

Moreover, network participation is resource intensive. Access to global public policy networks requires time, commitment and funds. Many developing countries, and most ordinary citizens, do not have sufficient resources to devote to national policy deliberations let alone global dialogues. They are ‘passive’ or ‘standing’ citizens in the agora compared to the ‘wholly active’ citizens of transnational policy communities.

Global Managers and Transnational Policy Communities

Transnational networks and policy processes calls forth new forms of leadership and public management. Policy making and administration of global nature means understanding different decision making milieu, greater cross cultural sensitivity and different behaviours on the part of policy actors. This is not limited to diplomats but has widened and applies to the more diverse ‘transnational policy communities’. Similarly, there are greater pressures on parliamentarians and political party officials to engage with counterparts (McLeay & Uhr, 2007). Indeed, the World Bank seed funded the development of the Parliamentary Network on the Bank (PNoB).¹⁷ Leadership skills required in the global agora mean functioning in several languages, comprehending the legal and political context of many policy venues (for example, the EU, neighbouring countries, WTO) and mastering different modes of communication and policy deliberation.

The geographical dispersion of international civil servants means that they meet irregularly, are highly reliant on information technology, and travel all the time. It may be the case that they adopt a globalized identity and outlook. In other words, the values guiding the behaviour of bureaucrats are increasingly shaped by the imperatives of the global economy and constraints on governmental policy (Baltodano, 1997: 625).

By fore-grounding their professional identity, they transcend the power of the nation-state system to impose its categories of identity upon them. They also tend to assume a global or regional rather than national outlook on key issues (Krause Hansen, Salskov-Iversen and Bislev, 2002: 109).

Whether or not transnational managers see themselves as a class apart is something that is

¹⁷ PNoB: <http://www.pnowb.org/>

yet to be subject to in-depth anthropological and ethnographic work. It is however, fertile ground for consideration of the types of policy entrepreneurs and various styles of professionalism in play.

Comparing transnational managers to traditional bureaucrats, their hybrid character suggests that they could be more difficult to control. This is largely due to their office being more privatized or less public. Their institutions and networks tend to behave like regulated organisations rather than extensions of administrative agencies under legislative control. Hybrid entities – given their private, informal and ‘delegated authority’ status – are also intrinsically less responsive to the political preferences of their political masters and publics. Moreover, networks are often temporary and can be easily unpacked and re-assembled into different entities. This makes enforcing accountability difficult. It is more than simply an issue of bureaucratic control as networked policy communities implies that public authority has been semi-privatized.

There is a sizeable literature from business studies – especially in the sub field of human resource management – concerning the global leadership models and styles (see Morrison 2000 for an overview). However, there is very little discussion in the political science, policy studies and international relations literatures regarding the different qualities and capacities of the diverse actors in the global agora. While there is a burgeoning literature on ‘policy entrepreneurs’, it tends to focus on the roles of such individuals at local and national levels of governance.

The requirements of a transnational network executive or officer of a philanthropic foundation (such as Gates, Ford or Aga Khan) may require management

skills and bureaucratic knowledge that differ from counterparts in national or local governments. Consequently, the types of graduate programs referred to earlier may well spread as pressures increase for innovation and creativity in how national leaders as well as non-state executives to project their organisational and community interests in the global agora. More young elites will be sent for international education and training. Already, international consortiums of graduate education such as the Global Public Policy Network aim “to prepare some of the world’s most able graduate students to assume global leadership roles in the coming decades”.¹⁸ Such programs provide graduate training for administrative positions in internationalized public sectors. These programs also cater for international organisations (which appear to be growing in number and policy ambit) as well as for a new generation of policy entrepreneurs who see their future careers in transnational networks and regimes.

Not only do countries need to rethink civil service training in order to fully and effectively negotiate global policy processes, so too the citizenry needs to consider these new domains for the pursuit of democratic accountability. For public policy and management scholars, it means a greater engagement with the increasingly related research communities of international relations, political economy and organization studies. For too long, the scholar of public policy and administration assumed an insulated sovereign domain within which to make policy. What happened beyond these borders was the stuff of foreign policy and diplomacy. Such assumptions are no longer tenable.

¹⁸ Lisa Anderson, Dean of Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs – SIPA: <http://www.prnewswire.co.uk/cgi/news/release?id=154039>

Conclusion

A global agora is evolving with different sets of networks, global public-private partnerships and multilateral initiatives. These global policy processes are distinguishable from national and inter-governmental processes, but remain inter-connected. The agora is portrayed in its network character, managed by business and policy elites, and more so exclusionary than participatory. The objective has been to shift the focus from institutions, actors and policies at the nation-state level, to address how policy making has transnational dimensions. This is not to deny the continuing power and impact of nation-states. The domestic politics of nation states will continue to ensure difference and diversity. States will remain important mediators of globalisation but their capacities to react and respond will differ dramatically. However, circumstances of complex multilateralism bring additional considerations of how global activists and networks by-pass national and inter-governmental policy making processes to influence international organisations, private regimes, and multilateral initiatives.

The global agora is a public space although it is one where authority is diffuse, decision making is dispersed and semi-privatised, and sovereignty is muddled by recognition of joint responsibility and collective action. Transnational networks – whether they go by the label ‘partnership’, ‘alliance’, ‘facility’ or ‘forum’ – are one mechanism of global public policy. For the scholar, these developments presage the need to overcome the methodological nationalism and agoraphobia of mainstream public policy scholarship to examine global policy processes and new managerial modes of transnational public administration.

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